



**Universidade de  
Aveiro  
2009**

Secção Autónoma de Ciências Sociais,  
Jurídicas e Políticas

**Sara Margarida  
Alpendre Diogo**

**A HERANÇA DE BOLONHA NO SISTEMA BINÁRIO  
DE ENSINO SUPERIOR PORTUGUÊS**

**THE BOLOGNA HERITAGE IN THE PORTUGUESE  
BINARY SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION**



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ENSINO SUPERIOR PORTUGUÊS: DIFERENTES  
PERFIS PARA AS UNIVERSIDADES E POLITÉCNICOS**

**THE BOLOGNA HERITAGE IN THE PORTUGUESE  
HIGHER EDUCATION BINARY SYSTEM: DIFFERENT  
PROFILES FOR UNIVERSITIES AND POLYTECHNICS**

Thesis presented to the University of Aveiro to fulfil the formalities essential to obtain the degree of European Master in Higher Education (Erasmus Mundus), done under the scientific supervision of Professor Alberto Manuel Sampaio Castro Amaral, Full Professor of the University of Porto and co-supervision of Professor Maria Teresa Geraldo Carvalho, Auxiliary Professor at the Autonomous Section of Social, Juridical and Political Sciences of the University of Aveiro.

Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Ensino Superior (Erasmus Mundus), realizada sob a orientação científica do Professor Doutor Alberto Manuel Sampaio Castro Amaral, Professor Catedrático da Universidade do Porto e co-orientação da Professora Doutora Maria Teresa Geraldo Carvalho, Professora Auxiliar da Secção Autónoma de Ciências Sociais, Jurídicas e Políticas da Universidade de Aveiro.

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## Palavras-chave

Ensino Superior; Instituições de Ensino Superior; Processo de Bolonha, Internacionalização; Europeização; Sistema binário; Universidade; Politécnico.

## Resumo

Esta dissertação analisa a forma como a legislação decorrente da implementação do processo de Bolonha foi utilizada para redefinir o sistema binário de ensino superior português. De forma a entender melhor a mudança institucional na área do ensino superior, este estudo baseia-se num quadro teórico e conceptual que visa enquadrar o leitor nos cenários de mudança internacional que explicam o surgimento e desenvolvimento do processo de Bolonha. A teoria da Dependência dos Recursos e os princípios do Novo Institucionalismo servem de base para analisar o comportamento das instituições, bem como a relação que estas estabelecem com o Estado português. Simultaneamente, é apresentada a evolução do sistema nacional de ensino superior, bem como o contexto de reforma onde Bolonha deu os primeiros passos.

Neste ambiente de mudança em que as instituições de ensino superior actuam, tanto o processo de tomada de decisão como o de formulação de políticas de ensino superior é redesenhado, dando origem a diferentes níveis de interacção e a uma multiplicidade de actores dos quais se destacam a União Europeia, a nível internacional, e o novo quadro legislativo de ensino superior elaborado a nível nacional. Neste sentido, é argumentado que, em Portugal (como em outros países signatários) o processo de Bolonha foi usado como “alavanca” para uma série de reformas que seriam mais difíceis de alcançar caso não tivessem sido desenhadas sob a égide de Bolonha. O reforço do sistema binário alcançado através da imposição coerciva da legislação referente a Bolonha é um exemplo destas reformas, bem como as diferentes respostas institucionais prosseguidas neste sentido.

Esta pesquisa evidencia diferentes interpretações sobre o carácter binário do sistema de ensino superior, bem como a sua reorganização institucional e programática, sem esquecer o contexto histórico, cultural e económico em que as instituições se encontram. Assim, apesar dos representantes de ambos os subsistemas defenderem a premência de um sistema diversificado, e dos esforços governamentais neste sentido, confirma-se que, num ambiente de competição e restrições financeiras, é ainda recorrente a existência de um comportamento mimético entre politécnicos e universidades.

Ao longo desta dissertação foi usada uma combinação de métodos qualitativos de recolha de dados, tais como análise de conteúdo e entrevistas semi-estruturadas. Foram também utilizados métodos quantitativos ao analisar o número de cursos aprovados em cada ciclo de estudos, de acordo com os dois subsistemas. Esta análise quantitativa revelou que apesar dos politécnicos terem conseguido aprovar um maior número de programas de 1º ciclo do que as universidades, o mesmo não aconteceu com os programas de mestrado. O fenómeno inverso foi sentido no sector universitário.

A importante colaboração de actores-chave do sistema de ensino superior português ligados à elaboração e implementação do processo de Bolonha nas universidades e politécnicos portuguesas permite dar a conhecer as diferentes percepções sobre as implicações que a nova legislação apresenta para o funcionamento do sistema binário, conferindo maior enriquecimento a esta dissertação.

## Keywords

Higher Education; Higher Education Institutions; Bologna Process, Internationalisation; Europeanisation; Binary System; University; Polytechnic.

## Abstract

This master thesis analyses the way the legislation which implements the Bologna Process was used to redefine the Portuguese binary system of higher education. In order to better understand institutional change in the higher education sector, the analysis is based on a theoretical and conceptual framework aiming to frame the reader into the international change scenarios and to explain the emergence and development of the Bologna process. The Resource Dependence Theory and the New-Institutionalism principles provide the basis to analyse institutional behaviour, as well as the relationship they maintain with the Portuguese state. Additionally, it is provided the development of the national higher education system and the context where the Bologna reform took its first steps.

In this changing environment, where higher education institutions operate, both the process of decision-making, as well as the process of policy formulation is redesigned, allowing for different levels of interaction and to a multiplicity of actors. From these, one highlights the European Union at the international level, and the new legal framework for higher education institutions elaborated at the national level. In this sense, it is argued that in Portugal (as in other signatory countries), the Bologna process was used as a lever for a set of reforms which would be far more difficult and time consuming to achieve without the label of the Bologna process. The strengthening of the binary system achieved through the Bologna legislation is an example of these reforms, as well as different institutional responses performed in this sense.

This research highlights different interpretations on the binary system of higher education, as well as its institutional and programmatic reorganisation, bearing in mind its historical, cultural and economic context where institutions operate. Thus, although the representatives of both subsystems defend the existence of a diversified higher education system, and the governmental efforts in this direction, one confirms that, in a competitive environment shaped by financial constraints, mimetic behaviour between polytechnics and universities is still evident.

Throughout this thesis, a combination of qualitative methods of data collection, such as content analysis and semi-structured interviews was used. Quantitative methods were also used when analysing the number of programmes approved in each cycle of studies according to each subsystem. This quantitative analysis revealed that, despite a higher number of 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programmes were approved in polytechnics than in universities, the same did not happen with 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle programmes. The opposite phenomenon happened in the university subsystem.

The important collaboration of key actors of the Portuguese higher education system who were linked with the development of the Bologna process and its implementation, both at universities and polytechnics, allows to know the different perceptions these actors have on the implications that the new legislation introduced to the operationalisation of the binary system, making this study enriched.

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## List of Abbreviations

**BFUG** - Bologna Follow-Up Group  
**CCISP** - Coordinating Council of the Portuguese Polytechnic Institutes  
**CHEPS** - Centre for Higher Education and Policy Studies  
**CIPES** - Centre for Research in Higher Education Policies  
**CNAVES** - National Council for Evaluation of Higher Education  
**CRE** – (old) Association of European Universities  
**CRUP** - Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities  
**DGES** - General Directorate of Higher Education  
**EAIE** - European Association for International Education  
**ECTS** - European Credit Transfer System  
**EHEA** - European Higher Education Area  
**ENQA** - European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education  
**EQF** - European Qualifications Framework  
**ERA** - European Research Area  
**ESG** - European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance  
**ESIB** - National Unions of Students in Europe  
**EU** - European Union  
**EUA** - European University Association  
**EURASHE** - European Association of Institutions in Higher Education  
**GPEARI** - Office for Planning, Strategy, Evaluation and International Relations)  
**HEIs** - Higher Education Institutions  
**MCTES** - Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education  
**NPM** - New Public Management  
**OECD** - Organisation for the Economic Cooperation and Development  
**OMC** - Open Method of Coordination

## 1. Introduction

Over the last decades, new economic, regulatory and social pressures at the global level dictated a new era for higher education systems, where policy design and implementation processes are no longer exclusively under nation-states' responsibility. Gradually, the dispersion of authority from the central government, due to the influence of neo-liberal ideologies, resulted in reallocation of powers. Consequently, the old social contract between society and higher education institutions (HEIs) has led to a redefinition of responsibilities and to the development of the notion of multi-level governance in the higher education sector. The emergence of new organisations in the international landscape allowed for new higher education dynamics, based on cooperation and harmonisation policies involving multi-actor relationships and the use of soft law mechanisms to coordinate the implementation of European policies. In this scenario, methods of coordination and transnational cooperation, such as the Bologna process, emerged in the higher education field as a sign of these renewed dynamics, where the efficiency of any civilisation is measured by the appeal its culture has to other countries. In this sense, and at the political sphere, the Bologna reform achieved unprecedented success, by voluntarily engaging 46 countries in the common wish of enhancing the competitiveness of their higher education systems.

At the national level, the implementation of the Bologna process was experienced with mixed feelings of fears and hopes. The main concerns with this reform related with the compatibility of the traditional degree structure with the new two-tier cycle structure and therefore, with the implementation of the new organisation in the binary system existent since 1974. Despite Portugal still being in the process of "catching up" up with Europe, the years 2007 and 2008 were very important for the modernisation and progress of the Portuguese higher education system. The government has been proactive in enacting legislation promoting the attainment of the Bologna objectives, but also on the promotion of the binary system. HEIs, on their side, have been interpreting and applying this legislation bearing in mind the context where they operate, their aspirations and the resources available for the achievement of the objectives. Due to the nature of the Portuguese higher education system, the reduction in the length of studies raised long discussions concerning the maintenance of the binary divide and subsequent mission of both types of institutions. Thus, the central aim of this study focuses on the role of the two main actors involved in the development of the reform which aims at promoting the binary system: the government and HEIs.

## 1.1 Background

Portugal was one of the 29 countries that in 19<sup>th</sup> June 1999 signed the Bologna declaration. Nevertheless, it was only in the academic year 2006-07 that the process assumed a more official form when the necessary legislation to implement Bologna was passed (in the year 2006). It was indeed a long and controversial process, especially for HEIs that aiming not to lag behind their European counterparts, had to wait for a long time for the legislative guidelines of the implementation. The process was constrained by the need to change the 1986 Education System Act passed by the Parliament, which defined the type and length of degrees each HEI could award.

Several aspects of the reform, such as the adoption of a system able to recognise academic degrees in a wider European area, the establishment of a common system of credits, the inclusion of lifelong learning strategies, the promotion of students' and academics' mobility, as well as the enhancement of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) received public support. However, "... the reduction of the length of the first cycle of studies to three years, in several continental European countries where it used to last for four or five years, is less consensual" (Cardoso, Alexandre, Portela and Sá 2006: 1). Moreover, "(...) distrust has been expressed over the academic contents and adequacy to labour market needs of the competencies transmitted in shorter three-year programmes, with fears that the employability of graduates will be reduced, when compared to graduates of the longer cycle" (Cardoso et al. 2006: 1). Indeed, as for other continental higher education systems, the most complex challenge for Portugal in implementing a 'platform' of comparable degrees, was the transition from a binary system, which offered two different first cycle degrees (the *bacharel*, awarded by the polytechnics and the *licenciatura*, which until 1997 was a prerogative of universities), to a still binary system, which confers a common first cycle degree for both subsystems, with all the entanglements this process entails.

At a time when considerable academic drift could be observable in the polytechnic sector, the compatibility of the binary system with the new two-tier degree system called for careful analysis (Veiga and Amaral 2009: 57). By that time, several discussions and seminars took place, and different proposals emerged, creating the feeling that the current binary structure was endangered and it could evolve to a unitary system (Amaral 2003; Veiga and Amaral 2009). Nevertheless, when the new legislation was finally passed it was clear that the government aimed to preserve or even reinforce the binary distinction (Veiga and Amaral

2009: 58), which was also clear on the Organisation for the Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on the Portuguese higher education system (OECD 2006). Thereby, in the following years the Portuguese system entered a process of deep reforms in several core areas, namely in terms of governance structure (system and institutional); quality assurance; equity and access; financial aspects; etc. Though much of these reforms have been linked to the Bologna process, for Portugal (as well as for other signatory countries), the declaration was considered a vehicle to pursue interests and bring about change in dimensions of the higher education system perceived as necessary (Witte 2006: 5). Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, the emphasis will be on the influence that the Bologna legislation had in the binary organisation of the national higher education system and how it influenced HEIs to pursue their institutional mission. This is of particular importance due to the existence of two phenomena that tend to occur in binary systems, composed of universities and polytechnics (or their equivalents), such as the Portuguese one. As Amaral (2003a) points out, instability can occur in the medium term, both because of academic drift of polytechnics in search of social standing vis-à-vis universities, and due to professional drift of universities responding to societal pressures to become more 'relevant' and to respond to increasing demands for employability of their graduates (2003a: 2). Therefore it is legitimate to wonder whether it is possible to look at the Bologna legislation as a means to maintain the systemic diversity of the Portuguese higher education system.

## **1.2 Motivation and Rationale of the Study**

At the beginning of this programme, in Oslo, students were required to prepare a paper about the characteristics of their own higher education system. As a Portuguese student, it was this moment that made me reflect upon the way the binary system exists in Portugal and how it would develop under the implementation of the Bologna process. Due to the phenomena of academic drift and professional drift aforementioned, it was intended to know how both subsystems would behave in presence of such international trends and of an increasingly competitive environment for funds, students and qualified academics. Moreover, the fact that HEIs and governments of 46 countries are voluntarily carrying out widespread reforms which in some cases radically change the existing organisation of their higher education systems is of personal great interest and curiosity. It reflects the developments of

the higher education field throughout time. Thus, after some focused reading on the topic, it was realised that Portuguese universities and polytechnics have been operating in an unhealthy way, competing for the same assets and blurring their institutional missions (Ferreira, Machado and Santiago 2008). Nevertheless, due to my past personal experience as a pre-Bologna undergraduate student and as a worker in the same conditions, the aspects that led my interest on the topic emerged from the new two-tier degree structure and the changes this would bring for the functioning of the system, especially for the vocational sector. Thereby, the purpose of this thesis is to discuss the role of the Portuguese government regarding the implementation and developments of the Bologna process in the Portuguese higher education system, taking into account government is a key actor in the promotion of diversity in the national educational system. Simultaneously, it aims to analyse how HEIs are responding to these reforms, namely how they construct and follow their institutional mission after the introduction of the new legislation.

### 1.3 Research Problem

Portugal was one of the few countries using the Bologna legislation as a means to redefine its binary divide. In order to understand how and why this singularity happened and what has been emphasised during the implementation process, the following research questions should be answered:

- *How is the Portuguese government dealing with the changes created by the Bologna process in the structure of the national system of higher education? And,*
- *How are HEIs reacting to these governmental initiatives?*

In order to explore the research problem, the following subsequent questions have been designed to better guide the research process and analysis.

1. How can the Bologna legislation contribute to clarify the binary division of the Portuguese higher education system?
2. Are there any differentiated strategies being taken by polytechnics and universities towards the government actions?

3. Which type of HEIs, universities or polytechnics, had more difficulties in the transition to the Bologna paradigm?
4. In which cycles of studies there were major changes? Does this vary according to the type of subsystem?
5. Will Portugal maintain a binary system? Or it would be possible, that in the long run, the present system converges into a unitary one?

## 1.4 Methodology

*Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.*

Albert Einstein

This study, on the functioning of the Portuguese binary system after the implementation of the Bologna legislation, uses a combination of qualitative methods of data collection, such as content analysis and semi-structured open-ended interviews. Quantitative methods were also used (however in a considerable lower percentage), when analysing the number of programmes approved in each cycle of studies and according to each subsystem. The rationale for using qualitative methodology lays on rational and pragmatic factors, such as the nature of the research topic (in this case *exploratory* research) and its context, the kind of research questions, the expertise and personality of the researcher and the researcher's time and budget (Blaikie 2000: 227). Moreover, though both approaches should not be exhaustively differentiated, qualitative research aims at understanding: it answers primarily to *how* questions (Blaikie 2000: 227). Also, as it is perceived by the aforementioned Einstein's quote, there are certain aspects, such as perceptions, values, thoughts and intentions that one can not measure with quantitative techniques. Thus, the combination of the qualitative methods used here allows for data source triangulation and thereby it facilitates comparison of the several findings through the different sources. This is of particular utility once, as Blaikie (2000) explains, when doing social research, qualitative analysis may occur in conjunction with data collection (2000: 232) and therefore, it might be difficult to accurately divide the stages and frontiers of both processes.

Evidence for the thesis is provided through several secondary and tertiary sources. These were combined with three semi-structured interviews to key actors of the Portuguese

higher education system (primary data). Thereby, in order to gain further insights on the international and European context that grounded the Bologna process as a mean to better analyse the implementation process in the national higher education system, an extensive documentation analysis was also conducted. This data source was composed both by international and national documents, as explained in the next section. Following the documentation study part, the process of data analysis took place alongside with the interviews. Thus, chapter V (devoted to the analysis of the main findings) is divided in two main parts. The first moment is dedicated to the study of the early stages and developments of the implementation process in Portugal. It provides clarification on the way the relationships between the government and HEIs were conducted, since the very beginning of the process. It also provides information on the distinguishing factors established by law for both universities and polytechnics. In the second moment, we analyse the perceptions of the interviewees on the way the overall process of implementation was developed, paying especial attention to the way they perceive the use of the Bologna legislation as a useful tool to help institutional diversity. This is complemented with documentation analysis (following subsection) and with the quantitative analysis related to the number of approved programmes carried out through the General Directorate of Higher Education (DGES) website.

The theoretical grounding for this study is quite complex, due to the nature of the research topic. The central aim of the thesis is to gather information on the renewed character of the binary system after the implementation of the Bologna legislation in Portugal. Thus, the theoretical framework should provide information on the phenomenon of organisational change in higher education, taking into account the nature of HEIs as a crucial factor in this process. This was performed according to two different but complementary perspectives: the neo-institutionalism and the resource dependence theories. Nevertheless, due to the multi-level and multi-actor relationships that the Bologna agreement entails, it was necessary to obtain further insights about the environment that allowed for such transformations. The growing importance that the international and European levels gained in higher education policy formulation calls for different actors and multi-level interaction relationships. Thereby, the theoretical framework on the specificities of organisational change was complemented by a conceptual analysis of the phenomena that explain the new higher education dynamics at a global scale.



In this changing environment, equally interesting is to understand how the Portuguese higher education system has accompanied this scenario. At different time periods and through different paths, the national system also followed *hybrid* approaches in what policy making is concerned. Change in the way HEIs are steered due to the emergence of new discourses such as the new public management (NPM), among other factors, reflect the shifts in governance modes in the Portuguese higher education system.

### 1.4.1 Document Analysis

Extensive document analysis was one of the most important data sources throughout this inquiry. Whether one categorises this type of source into “international” and “national”, and starting with the first category, one can say that the international data analysed were, first of all, the documents that helped to clarify the origin and evolution of the Bologna process. As examples, they are: the Magna Charta Universitatum (1988); the Sorborne Declaration (1998); the Bologna Declaration (1999); the Lisbon Strategy (2000); the Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005) and London (2007) Communiqués; as well as other reports and monitoring data on the process. At the national level, especial attention was given to the national Bologna-related policy documents developed since 2005 and the legislation on the main changes in the Portuguese higher education system as a leitmotif of research. The aim was to analyse primarily developments of the nature and organisation of both subsystems, their supply of programmes<sup>1</sup> and cycles of studies. Other national assessment reports (elaborated by the OECD, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA, and the Bologna Follow-Up Group - BFUG); reports from the Ministry for Science, Technology and Higher Education (MCTES) and from the DGES were also included in the analysis. All these data are relevant in order to track the policy maker’s initiatives related to the participation of Portugal in the Bologna declaration, to highlight the role of the government and HEIs at the different stages of the process and to understand the coordination mechanisms of these policies. The content analysis technique also allowed for studying changes regarding the conceptualisation of professional and vocational education, since national and international trends in this area have changed. Binary systems are supposed to be different, especially in the type of education offered, but one can observe isomorphic

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<sup>1</sup>To achieve consistency throughout the text, I use the word “programme” to refer to the set of disciplines that enable to issue an academic diploma (in Portuguese: *curso*, my translation).

behaviours in both subsystems due to the need to be internationally attractive to compete in a globalised society.

Tertiary data from scientific articles and surveys on the Bologna implementation in the country were gathered to provide the research with reliable sources. All these data were later compared and supported by the interviews, which provided the research with empirical evidence on implementation challenges and expectations.

### 1.4.2 Interviews

Interviews are one of the most important sources of information. Throughout the empirical process it is essential to consider different perspectives when collecting and analysing the data. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, interviews were conducted with the following actors to allow for a variety of perceptions:

- The head of the Council of Rectors of Portuguese Universities (CRUP);
- The head of the Coordinating Council of Polytechnic Institutes (CCISP) and
- The national representative of the BFUG in the year 2000 and General Rapporteur for the BFUG in Prague (2001). At the present, he is the Dean for Pedagogical Affairs of the Technical University of Lisbon, and since 2003 he monitors the implementation of the Bologna framework in this institution.<sup>2</sup>

This selection was based on the different roles these actors performed (and still perform) in the implementation and coordination of the Bologna process in Portugal. At different stages, they lived *in loco* the most challenging changes of the Bologna framework, namely the change of the traditional degree structure, the transition from the traditional teaching paradigm to a student-learning paradigm, the latest developments in the new legal framework for HEIs, etc. They are considered to be key actors to provide information on the way HEIs responded to the new legislation and therefore, on the consolidation of the system's binary division. Nevertheless, one should remember that what it is aimed to gather with interviews are these actors' perceptions, and therefore, these vary according to the institutional role they have. As an example, ideas about the results achieved so far might have different interpretations among the interviewed. As Patton (2002) clarifies, "... the purpose of

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<sup>2</sup> As it was not possible to personally interview Prof. Pedro Lourtie, the interview guideline was submitted through email. The same channel was used to obtain the answers.

interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective (...)", once the interviewer assumes that these perspectives are "(...) meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit. Therefore, we interview to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories (...)" (2002: 341), once the purpose of qualitative interviews is to capture complexities of the interviewed individual perceptions and experiences (2002: 348). And that it is why "(...) this openness distinguishes qualitative interviewing from the closed questionnaire or test used in quantitative studies" (2002: 341).

For the topic of this research and also due to the time available, it was chosen to do semi-structured interviews, where a set of questions were asked to all interviewed in order to best compare their perceptions. Nonetheless, additional questions were raised during the course of the conversation. The advantage of an interview guide is that, as Patton (2002) explains, it allows for a better time management once it sets priorities (2002: 343).

As the interviews were held in Portuguese, all the translations in this document are responsibility of the researcher<sup>3</sup>.

## **1.5 Organisation of the Study**

The first chapter introduces the background of the study, research problem and subsequent research questions, as well as the methodology chosen. It also exposes the personal motivations and rationale for choosing this topic. Chapter II provides the theoretical and conceptual grounding which allows for an analysis where reform operates, both at international and national levels. It also justifies the selection of the theories chosen. The third chapter outlines the Bologna process background and its evolution, starting from the Magna Charta Universitatum and the Sorbonne Declaration and provides a brief overview of the following ministerial summits. The policy process which 'regulates' the Bologna process it is also explained. The national higher education system is presented in Chapter IV, where especial attention is given to the creation and development of the vocational sector in Portugal. Chapter V is dedicated to the analysis of the data provided and the main findings. It discusses the research problem and subsequent research questions, based on the documents analysed (namely the legislation, national and international reports), on quantitative analysis and on the findings gathered through the interviews. The last chapter, VI, presents the overall conclusions of the thesis and suggestions for future research.

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<sup>3</sup> See interview guideline in Appendix 1, page 116.

## 2. Steps towards a Theoretical Framework

This second chapter is devoted to the explanation of the research topic according to two different, but complementary theoretical perspectives. It aims to position the research focus in the relevant literature in order to justify the approaches used here and to provide a theoretical basis to understand both the Portuguese government and HEIs behaviour during the preparation for the implementation of the Bologna process. Therefore, since this study also aims at understanding institutional responses, some insights on organisational change, as well as policy formulation and implementation processes should be provided alongside this section. However, institutional change does not occur in a vacuum and HEIs behaviour is conditioned by the context where they operate. Thereby, one needs to be conversant with the most significant international and national transformations in order to better understand the process of institutional change in higher education.

### 2.1 Introduction

HEIs are complex organisations operating in an open system, receiving inputs from, and producing outputs for their environments. Within each institution there are independent units, which are separated and/or tied from its environments according to their level of loosely or tightly coupling (Birnbaum 1989). Therefore, institutional theories<sup>4</sup> represent a good theoretical ground for this study. *Inter alia*, they help us to understand political transformations in organisations (Olsen 2002: 925) and the relationships between institutions and the government, as well as their internal dynamics (Gornitzka 1999).

Due to the profoundly changing environment affecting the institutional management and leadership capacity of HEIs, it is acknowledged that they need to compete for all kind of resources. This, in turn, influences the way institutions define their mission and the strategies chosen to operationalise their goals. Therefore, the rationale behind the choice of the theories here exposed lays down on two basic assumptions shared by them:

“(...) organisational choice and action are limited by various external pressures and demands, and the organisations must be responsive in order to survive” (Gornitzka 1999: 7).

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<sup>4</sup> In this study mainly the neo-institutionalism principles will be analysed.

As the name itself suggests, the resource dependence theory (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978) explains how organisations react in presence of a scarcity of resources in the environment. Complementary to this idea, the neo-institutional perspective focuses on how institutions influence and are influenced by the environment where they operate. It clarifies why institutions end up acquiring the same modes of organisation and how they influence the behaviour of their members (March and Olsen 1984; 1998).

### **2.1.1 The Resource Dependence Theory**

The resource dependence perspective has been developed by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) and shares with open systems theory the idea that organisations are flexible and perceived as reactive once they interact with their environments. This interaction happens in a reciprocal way: not only are organisations dependent on their environments, but they are also able to influence the environment where action takes place. Thus, according to the resource dependence perspective, one can say that organisations, in their external environment, are dependent on key actors in order to gain more resources. Simultaneously, they strive to attain effectiveness and efficiency in the pursuit of objectives that are important for these actors and for the institution. This mutual interaction is easier to understand if one looks at other organisations as part of the environment where a specific institution tries to adapt itself, and thereby, during the process of adaptation and interaction, this institution will react to the outcomes brought by these changes.

Referring to the environment under which organisations operate, Birnbaum reinforced this view some years latter. In his 1989 book about organisation and governance of HEIs he explains that, in order to organisations survive they need to be responsive to their environments, and the actions taken by their leaders pave the institutions' future. He argues that "... the number and pervasiveness of these environmental forces have increased almost exponentially at many institutions over the past decades" (1989: 15). Thus, in order to create survival strategies, HEIs have to take into account both its internal and external environments. Nevertheless, interdependence can lead to conflict and uncertainty, which in turn leads to changes in the relationships between organisations. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) point out that, as organisations become mutually dependent and work to ensure themselves a sufficient flow of resources they try to manage their interdependence with other organisations while maintaining as much discretion as possible. By doing this, they try to reduce the uncertainty created by dependence on others. Nevertheless, as the authors refer, it is important to notice

that when organisations try to adapt to the constraints imposed by interdependence and conflict relations, they tend to merge or create joint ventures, which might contribute to an increase in the homogeneity levels among organisations (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).

Starting from the assumption that environmental transformation induces organisational change, the emphasis of this perspective lays not only in understanding how organisations relate strategically to other social actors in their environment. It tries to put forward the rationale on how organisations make active and rational choices to manage their dependency on those parts of the environment that control vital resources (Gornitzka 1999: 7). In this way, this approach implies the existence of predictability and reduction of uncertainty factors in institutional behaviour when facing a situation of resources scarcity. Indeed, both the resource dependence theory and the (neo-) institutionalism perspective, create conditions, which allow "... to predict the likelihood that organisations will resist or conform to institutional pressures and expectations" (Oliver 1991: 146).

### **2.1.2 The Neo-Institutionalism Theory**

March and Olsen (1998) explain that an institutional approach is one that emphasises the role of institutions and institutionalisation in the understanding of human actions within an organisation, social order, or society (March and Olsen 1998: 948). However, as Witte (2006) points out, when analysing this perspective, it is important to keep in mind that the term "institution" does not necessarily means the same as "organisation" (like most, institutional theorists use the term to refer to regulatory structures and/or governmental agencies). It rather refers to a set of rules and norms that can, but do not need to coincide with the rules and norms that constitute an 'organisation' (2006: 33). Therefore, the word "institution" here will mainly refer to HEIs.

More specifically, the neo-institutional perspective places particular attention on the taken-for-granted character of institutional rules, myths and beliefs as shared social reality and on the processes by which organisations tend to become embedded with value and social meaning (Oliver 1991: 145). The interest lays on how organisations adapt to norms and beliefs in their environments and not to resource dependencies (differently from the resource dependence theory). As the author explains, according to this perspective, organisations combine conformity to environmental expectations with organisational stability. Furthermore,

the neo-institutional theory also provides information about how institutions shape the behaviour of their members, through the principle of the *logic of appropriateness*<sup>5</sup>.

With respect to organisational responses, Gornitzka (1999) draws attention to the different types of environmental change that can occur, once organisational change can be understood as an outcome of reforms (1999: 9). This type of neo-institutionalism holds particularly valid for those institutions that, towards their stability of values, beliefs and perceptions, often feel resilient and inert with efforts to create reforms (March and Olsen 1984). This can be avoided if changes are compatible with an organisation's institutional identity or culture. That is why many studies within the neo-institutionalism field emphasise the survival value of organisational *conformity* to institutional environments (Gornitzka 1999: 9). Nevertheless, for the research purposes here, it is more relevant to look at changes as a result of governmental and intergovernmental initiatives. In order to this happen, "... a *normative match* is necessary, i.e., congruence between the values and beliefs underlying a proposed programme or policy and the identity and traditions of the organisation" (1999: 10).

The new institutionalism perspective is therefore useful to construct a feasible framework of analysis, based on rules, routines, norms and identities of an institution, rather than micro rational individuals or macro social forces (March and Olsen 2005: 20). These authors also believe that this theoretical grounding allows for better understanding how different processes of change interact and make institutions co-evolve through mutual adaptation.

### **2.1.3 Combining and complementing both theories in order to understand organisational change**

Although it is common to find the topic of organisational change analysed according to two basic assumptions, *perfect flexibility* or *perfect inertia* (Gornitzka 1999: 6), it will be more useful to produce a *combination* between the theories aforementioned and complement them with other fundamental *theoretical building blocks*. By identifying commonalities and divergent elements between them, one will be able to identify potential strategic responses to

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<sup>5</sup> The *logic of appropriateness* theory (*which shapes behaviour and choices besides the maximisation of utility*) helps to explain and understand the effects of the social and symbolic side of the organisations. March and Olsen (1998) explain that citizens perceive the need to follow rules which associate particular identities to particular situations in order to acquire personal self knowledge skills, which in turn will help in the decision making process. In this case, as the authors point out, appropriateness refers to cognitive and ethical dimensions, targets and aspirations. We 'explain' foreign policy as the application of rules associated with particular identities to particular situations. "We 'explain' behaviour by determining the identities that are evoked and the meaning given to a situation" (1998: 951).

institutional/ (inter)national pressures and expectations, as well as, to depict assumptions with respect to the degree of choice, awareness, proactiveness, influence and self-interest that organisations exhibit in response to institutional pressures (Oliver 1991: 146). When combining both these theories, one can understand that institutions have the power and the ability to change the environment where they operate. They do it strategically, in order to obtain the possible best resources for an efficient performance. In a similar logic, the changes which occur in this environment (being it institutional, national or/and international/global) will also influence institutions' behaviour. This explains why, in order to survive, institutions must be responsive to external demands, pressures and interconnectedness of environments (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).

According to Oliver (1991: 146-150) organisational responses to environmental pressures depend on five “external” conditions. They are: 1- the *cause* (why pressure is being exerted); 2- the *constituent* (the person exerting pressure); 3- the *content* (what the pressures consist of); 4- the *control* (how and by what means they are exerted) and 5 - the *context* (where they occur). Following the framework proposed by Oliver, Gornitzka (1999) explains that in order to deeper understand how HEIs change, it is of particular importance to analyse their structural nature (see subsection 2.1.5). This will also allow for an understanding about how and why policies fail or are successfully implemented (1999: 11).

For a better understanding and perception of the resource dependence theory and the institutionalism perspectives, it was here included the framework elaborated by Oliver (1991) which presents both theories' theoretical principles, as well as their convergent and divergent elements (see table 1). With respect to the divergent foci, Oliver (1991) mentions that differences between the context of organisational behaviour, especially in what institutional versus task environment is concerned

“... suggest different loci of external power (those who shape and enforce institutional rules and beliefs versus those who control scarce resources) and different linkage processes between the organization and environment (exchange and resource flows versus incorporation and isomorphism)” (1991: 148).

In turn, these differences allow for alternative conclusions about appropriate responses to the environment. Other authors also point to the fact that the resource dependence theory applies to the need of adapting to environmental uncertainty by actively managing resource flows. As Oliver (1991) states, though both proponents of these perspectives see organisational change as an outcome of a context of external constraints, they have attributed different degrees of “constraint” according to each theory. That is why, the



new-institutional theorists tend “... to focus on conformity rather than resistance, passivity rather than activeness, and preconscious acceptance rather than political manipulation (...)” as means to deal with these environmental constraints (1991: 149).

**Table 1 - Comparison of Institutional and Resource Dependence Perspectives**

<b>Divergent Foci</b>			
<b>Explanatory Factor</b>	<b>Convergent Assumptions</b>	<b>Institutional Perspective</b>	<b>Resource Dependence Perspective</b>
<b>Context of Organisational Behaviour</b>	Organisational choice is constrained by multiple external pressures	Institutional environment Non choice behaviour	Task environment Active choice behaviour
	Organisational environments are collective and interconnected	Conforming to collective norms and beliefs Invisible pressures	Coping with interdependencies Visible pressures
	Organisational survival depends on responsiveness to external demands and expectations	Isomorphism Adherence to rules and norms	Adaptation Management of Scarce resources
<b>Motives of Organisational Behaviour</b>	Organisations seek stability and predictability	Organisational persistence Habit and convention	Reduction of uncertainty Power and influence
	Organisations seek legitimacy	Social worthiness Conformity to external criteria	Resource mobilisation Control of external criteria
	Organisations are interest driven	Interests institutionally defined Compliance self-serving	Interests political and calculative Noncompliance self-serving

Source: Adapted from Oliver 1991: 147.

Other important conditions determining institutional responses are the motives, the rationale for acting in a certain way. On this, both theories emphasise the search for stability and legitimacy and assume that organisations may be interest driven, though interests tend to be social or institutionally defined from an institutional perspective. It is interesting to notice that, in the Portuguese case, this symbolic reason of legitimacy is probably the most important and influent one for the rise of the academic drift in the polytechnic subsystem. The need to acquire legitimacy and social prestige always moved Portuguese polytechnics to aspire higher in the academic hierarchical ladder (Magalhães 2004; Cardoso, Carvalho and Santiago 2007; Veiga and Amaral 2009). Although both perspectives mention the importance of gaining legitimacy for purposes of social relevance and acquisition of all type of resources this implies

that the resource dependence theory pays more attention to the instrumentality of legitimacy (Oliver 1991: 250).

#### **2.1.4 Institutionalism Isomorphism: Implications for Strategic Responses**

The work of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) about institutional isomorphism helps to complement this analysis. These researchers advocated that, since the moment a group of organisations emerge as a field, “(...) a paradox arises: rational actors make their organisations increasingly similar as they try to change them” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 147). What can lead organisations, after becoming an institutional field, to adopt a common set of patterns, characteristics and specific behaviour, leading them to be increasingly homogenous? Even when organisations try to change constantly and seek new ways to improve their performance, one can notice that after a certain period of time, these efforts to change are not balanced with the level of diversity that exists within a field (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). As it was aforementioned, this happens because organisations need to adapt and deal with the pressures imposed by the environments where they operate. As institutions continue to work on their adaptation process and to find mechanisms to deal with uncertainty and constraints, they tend to become more homogeneous in terms of structure, culture and output. This is valid for old institutions, as well as new ones, which try to penetrate in the recent institutionalised environment (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Thus, as the authors explain, the concept that best fits the process of homogenisation is “(...) isomorphism – a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (1983: 149). According to Hannan and Freeman (1977) isomorphism can occur due to competition for scarce resources among competing organisations. The authors assume that market competition and resource niche pursuit are the most important aspects for organisations’ success and survival. However, this *per se* does not explain how organisations act when faced to a resource scarcity scenario. The institutional isomorphism stream is a useful tool for our complementary understanding on institutional dynamics, once it considers both certain environmental conditions and specific organisational characteristics as main factors for the success and survival of institutions. Thus, according to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), there are three forms of institutional isomorphism, which impel a decrease in systematic diversity, since all of them lead to an increasing similarity in institutions’ behaviour. These forms of

institutional behaviour are: *coercive*, *mimetic* and *normative* isomorphism (1983: 150). Powell (2007) explains that:

“Coercive factors involved political pressures and the force of the state, providing regulatory oversight and control; normative factors stemmed from the potent influence of the professions and the role of education; and mimetic forces drew on habitual, taken-for-granted responses to circumstances of uncertainty” (2007: 2).

As coercive isomorphism results from the pressures applied by the state on organisations (Van Vught 2008), the changes brought by these pressures are a direct response to government orders, as it is explained by DiMaggio and Powell (1983): “(...) the existence of a common legal environment affects many aspects of an organization’s behaviour and structure” (1983: 150). Both researchers also analysed Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) contributions on organisational diversity and concluded that: in a politically constructed environment, political decision makers tend to not experience directly the consequences of their actions; and also that, once political decisions are applied to a set of organisations, decisions become less adaptive and less flexible (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Whether one goes a little bit back on the comparison between the neo-institutionalism and the resource dependence theories, one will remember that the former perspective emphasises the causal impact of state, societal, and cultural pressures, as well as, effects of history, rules, and consensual understandings opposing in this way to the market forces and resource scarcity from the later theory (Oliver 1991: 151).

Trying to apply these concepts to the Portuguese case, one can observe that institutions are not (yet) operating in a market-driven environment but in a strongly institutionalised one, where some of the Humboldtian ideals still prevail<sup>6</sup> (Amaral and Magalhães 2008). When analysing the evolution of the national higher education system, it is visible that, a lack of public resources and a climate of financial difficulties allowed the development of the private sector, which permitted an increase in the number of students enrolment “... without additional demands on the public budget” (Amaral and Magalhães 2008: 209). Reflecting upon the normative aspects which contribute to an increase in isomorphism behaviour, especially when analysing the rise of academic drift in the polytechnic sector, it is visible the hand of mimetic behaviour in the polytechnic professionals who were

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<sup>6</sup> This view might be *threatened* by Law 62/2007 of 10 September which sets the new legal framework for the higher education system and follows more or less closely the OECD recommendations. As Amaral explains, the influence of NPM is quite visible: the dimension of collegiate advisory bodies is decreased; universities may ask the Ministry to become public Foundations under private law; there are initiatives for transforming the funding system into performance based funding.

graduated in universities, and thereby carrying to the polytechnic subsystem the university culture they acquired in the past (Kyvik 2007: 334). Additionally, it should be also mentioned the fact that professional orders represent a powerful actor in the national higher education system and their performance standards are considered too important not to be taken into account. Thus, these external actors may induce institutions to behave and to manage their programmes according to the levels of requirements of these organisations.

With respect to coercive factors, one could make an analysis on how institutions react to different environments and pressures coming from different levels of influence. In the particular case of this study, coercive factors represent the legislation enacted by the government towards the implementation of the Bologna process, which defines what HEIs are expected to do. This would shed some light on the fact that, although there might be some tendency for increasing homogeneity in HEIs behaviour, these respond differently to the diverse constraints they face. In turn, mimetic forces symbolise the expressions of *academic drift* (in the vocational subsystem) and *professional drift* (of the university subsystem). Mimetic forces are thus in accordance with the neo-institutionalism theory, as Gornitzka (1999) refers: “When organisations change according to institutional expectations, they do so in a context of taken for granted norms and beliefs” (Gornitzka 1999: 9).

Very briefly, this analysis suggested that institutional responses vary according to a wide number of factors, among them, the intensity of environmental pressures on institutions and the external dependencies they maintain with the environment. The permanent search for stability and legitimacy is therefore the main rationale which will determine institutional behaviour. Nevertheless, the underlying motives explaining the search for these two assets vary according to the aforementioned theories. The institutionalism theory emphasises institutional isomorphism behaviour (the reproduction or imitation of organisational structures) as a response to state pressures, expectations of professions and/or collective norms of the institutional environment (Oliver 1991: 149). This goes much in line with what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) defined as *coercive*, *mimetic* and *normative* isomorphism. In contrast, the resource dependence theory argues that in order to achieve stability and legitimacy, institutions need to exercise power or “(...) negotiate interdependencies for purposes of achieving a stable inflow of vital resources and reducing environmental uncertainty” (Oliver 1991: 149). Additionally, and apart from what one can learn with those theories, one should remember that organisational change in higher education is specifically different from other

fields of study. Thereby, it is essential to look now at the nature and structure of HEIs to better understand how this process happens in the higher education field.

### **2.1.5 The nature of HEIs as important factors in organisational change**

Whenever one thinks about universities or other higher education providers there are certain characteristics that immediately come into our mind and largely determine how these institutions are organised and how the process of change occurs, making it slow and not always easy to carry out. Interesting enough is the fact that universities, as one of the most traditional of all institutions, are the most responsible for changes in society (Castells 2001). Some of the main hallmarks of the nature of HEIs, based on Burton Clark (1983) work will be briefly remembered, as they seem relevant for the analysis of this issue.

Within HEIs the primary source of authority is the professional expertise, which means that, concerning the distribution of authority, only the professional expert can make many decisions (Gornitzka 1999: 12). The bottom-dominated (“bottom-heavy”) form of governance in HEIs is one of their main distinctive characteristics (Clark 1983: 133), which also implies that the organisation of the academic work is *fragmented* according to scientific disciplines. This affects the academic profession and the structure of the institutions. Indeed, one may say that, the academic profession, particularly under the Humboldtian tradition and due to its high level of fragmentation, still enjoys great autonomy and freedom of teaching and research. As Gornitzka (1999) explains, it is believed that the function and objectives of HEIs are best served in an environment of academic freedom. Therefore, there is also low interdependence of faculties, which brings us to the concepts of “loose coupling”<sup>7</sup> (Weick 1976) and “social choice” explained by Clark (1983) as: “... at the far end there is a ‘social choice’ context in which there are no inclusive goals, and decisions are made independently by autonomous organizations” (1983: 137). These two factors together (distribution of decision making and the high degree of fragmentation) condition “... the extent to which co-ordinated change in as well as of higher education organisations is possible or likely” (Gornitzka 1999: 12). Nevertheless, and as the author refers, one should not forget that these conditions vary not only according to the type and size of HEIs but also, according to different national systems. It would be very incoherent to compare, for example, China and Norway for these

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<sup>7</sup> Weick describes loose coupling as “... the image that coupled events are responsive, *but* that each event also preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logic separateness” (Weick 1976: 3).

conditions... Indeed, the study of HEIs' freedom and autonomy offers the possibility to deepen the knowledge of the different types of relationships between governments and institutions. In this analysis, one should take into consideration the symbolic side of any organisation, since it transmits a special meaning to the personal and professional fulfilment of its members, giving them a sense of belonging to the institution. The beliefs, as well as the cultural side of the organisation, allow to share a common identity, helping the members of any organisation in answering the following questions: “ (...) who they are, what they are doing, why they are doing it, and whether they have been blessed or cursed” (Clark 1983: 72)<sup>8</sup>. As Oliver (1991) also mentioned, organisational behaviour is very often driven by “... preconscious acceptance of institutionalised values or practices” (1991: 149).

The size of an organisation, as well as the persecution of multiple and ambiguous purposes also influence the way HEIs deal with external pressures and demands. Generally, larger organisations have more resources and abilities to deal with external environment constraints, though this is not always verified (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978).

In a general way, it can be said that the processes of change in systems organised around knowledge, the “building block of higher education”, are disjointed, incremental and invisible (Clark 1983). Thus, trying to interpret and understand the cultural dimension of the organisational change process is imperative to better address the research problem and subsequent research questions here proposed.

## 2.2 Policy Process

Once presented the theoretical grounding, which explains how HEIs operate under conditions of environmental uncertainty and resources scarcity, as well as some characteristics which determine organisational change, it is necessary to identify, within the complex nature of policy processes, a framework to examine the research problem. This could be based on Gornitzka's (1999) policy analysis based on five characteristics and attributes of the policy content:

- a) - policy problems (the problem/issue that the policy aims to address);
- b) - objectives (whether they aim to change, adjust or maintain the behaviour);
- c) - instruments (means employed to implement and attain the objectives);

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<sup>8</sup> See note of *logic of appropriateness* on page 17.

- d) - linkages (degree of coherence and consistency in the policy); and
- e) - normative basis (values and beliefs underpinning a particular policy).

This framework should be therefore applied to a multi-level context, due to the nature of the research focus, although the discussion will be on the policy process in general. It is not aimed to go deeply into the stages of policy-making (Enders, Jeliaskova and Maassen 2003). It is rather aimed at understanding the development of the relationship between government policies and HEIs responses within the process of policy framework of the Bologna process.

Taking Gornitzka (1999) definition on policy, "... a public statement of an objective and the kind of instruments that would be used to achieve it" (1999: 14), it is then necessary to define the level of analysis one wants to focus according to the research problem. As the author explains, providing that our core analysis are the institutional change processes in interaction with and response to government initiatives, one should focus at the national level, meaning here, government policy processes (1999: 15). Nevertheless, the government initiatives are therefore a response to an intergovernmental agreement signed by 46 countries, which implies a multi-level and multi-actor analysis of the aforementioned framework. Actually, looking at the research problem through this perspective, it is legitimate to wonder whether the Bologna declaration is, in fact, a policy document. As Witte (2004) points out, "(...) the Bologna declaration, its vagueness reflects the fact that it has not been imposed top-down but agreed upon by several independent nation states" (2004: 420). Therefore, "(...) it can hardly be considered a policy in the classical sense - rather, it is a declaration of intent that can be translated into policies at the national level" (2004: 420). Nevertheless, once referred to the "top-down or bottom up central debate" (Gornitzka, Kyvik and Stensaker 2005: 41), and bearing in mind the definition of policy provided above, the Bologna declaration includes all these dimensions. Furthermore, the aims and objectives of the agreement ended up to be transformed into (national) policies and the signatory countries bi-annually discuss them at the stocktaking summits.

With respect to the objectives underlying the aims of a certain policy, Gornitzka (1999) explains that these vary according to three different dimensions. The first is "... whether policies and programmes are directed at changing, adjusting or maintaining behaviour of target organisations or groups (...)", meaning this that a policy aims at innovating or maintaining standard operating procedures (1999: 17). Secondly, policies can be characterised according "... to the level of change in the higher education system it is aimed at" (*ibid*). "Is it planned to change the whole system or only some institutions or individuals?" The last dimension

mentioned by the author is the “functional breadth of change”, also known as “functional complexity”, meaning whether a policy consists of one or several programmes (1999: 18). For an effective policy design and implementation process it is important to identify these three dimensions, not forgetting that, due to the nature of HEIs, objectives tend to be “... multiple (because we want many things), conflicting (because we want different things) and vague (because that is how we can agree to proceed without having to agree also on exactly what will be done)” (Majone and Wildavsky 1978: 108 *in* Gornitzka et al. 2005: 43), as it is the case of the Bologna process. In a further analysis of the implementation of the Bologna process it is possible to perceive that Portuguese HEIs used the legislation imposed by the government, on the implementation of the process, to make pedagogical and curricula reforms without, however, “... targeting the reform to the goals of Bologna (e.g. mobility and employability)” (Veiga and Amaral 2009: 62).

It was already mentioned that the nature of HEIs conditions the way policy processes are thought and implemented. In this way, the bottom-up perspective seems more plausible for the “bottom-heavy” higher education sector. As can be read in Gornitzka et al. (2005), top-down approaches tend to be heavily criticised by the proponents of the bottom-up perspectives. They consider that through the first approach, the implementation process works as a technical procedure. Among other reasons, this happens because top-down perspectives tend to ignore initiatives coming from other policy subsystems, as for example, the private sector. Also, as HEIs gain more autonomy it becomes increasingly difficult (and probably inefficient) to implement top-down policies. Furthermore, these approaches are difficult to use in situations where there is no dominant policy or agency, but rather a multitude of governmental directives and actors (Gornitzka et al. 2005: 43). When one thinks about the complexity of levels and actors involved in the implementation of the Bologna process, a top-down initiative does not seem to be the most appropriate<sup>9</sup>, but rather an hybrid model consisting of mutual dependency relations, as it is suggested by Enders et al. (2003) in the classic stage approach (Enders et al. 2003: 8)<sup>10</sup>. Indeed, the Bologna process offers an interesting (and challenging) example of complex policy analysis, due to its goal ambiguity of initial policies and the blurring of phases. This, states Witte (2006), requires a theoretical approach different from the top-down approaches of classical policy and implementation

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<sup>9</sup> Due to the nature of its characteristics, the implementation of the Bologna process was achieved through *soft law* procedures, namely the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). This will be further discussed in subsection 3.4.1.

<sup>10</sup> See model in Appendix number 2.



analysis. The bottom-up proponents, “... start by mapping the network of actors at the bottom of the implementation chain, asking them about their goals, strategies, activities and contacts. These contacts are then used as a mean to identify the network of actors involved in the execution of a public policy at the local level” (Gornitzka et al. 2005: 44). Looking at the functioning of the Bologna process, one can identify these networks as the signatory countries that biannually meet at conferences to reflect upon the results achieved so far and the challenges lying ahead.

When analysing the process of policy implementation underlying the Bologna process, one should consider differences according to the level of analysis. Since there is no dominant policy or agency at the supranational level to strictly control the way each government implements the Bologna guidelines in their own higher education system, the main strategies used in implementing the process are neither top-down or bottom-up in nature, but rather a mix of both. Nevertheless, when one analyses the implementation process at the national and institutional levels, one will find differences in this process, as the case of Portugal. We will see on chapter V that the Portuguese government used top-down initiatives to implement the Bologna process and used its ‘power’ as a mean to pursue its interests.

Briefly, Gornitzka’s framework (1999) draws our attention for the important role that the government has in maintaining a healthy environment “... within which the day-to-day relationship between higher education and the government takes place” (1999: 22). Moreover, it remembers how it is essential bearing in mind the institutional and historical context of a certain system when “... policies and programmes are developed and organisational change processes are positioned” (Gornitzka et al. 2005: 50).

At a time of constant change in the higher education sector, where compromises between the governments and HEIs no longer rely only in the *old social contract* (Maassen and Cloete 2002), and they include more actors and arrangements, it is important to know how these changes influence the way policies are designed and implemented. As several authors mention, it is necessary to identify the consequences of these changes. This needs to be complemented with some insights on the way traditional governing mechanisms have been challenged. The next section aims to clarify how shifts in governance modes affect policy processes.

## 2.3 Governance and Governance Shifts

The term “governance” has become a key concept in many fields of study and it is a core issue when studying policy processes, since it defines the normative framework within which these processes take place. Understanding the governance context under which relationships between HEIs and governments occur, allows us to depict institutional responses to this interaction. Cloete, Maassen and Muller (2005) state that “... governance includes, in addition to the policy dimension, also the way a social sector such as higher education is organised and structured, as well as the way in which the management functions and decision-making structures in the sector are arranged” (2005: 208). Though this definition gives us an idea of what the term refers to within the higher education sector, it is important to define the concept according to the focus of analysis. In this case, this includes institutional and system governance. Maassen (2003) refers to institutional governance as “(...) the frameworks in which universities and colleges manage themselves and about the processes and structures used to achieve the intended outcomes (how higher education institutions operate)” (2003: 32). At the system level, Goedegebuure, Hayden and Meek (2008) explain that governance can be seen as “(...) a relational concept that includes leadership, management and administration, and, somewhat more implicitly, a sense of purpose and direction, in our case for higher education. In other words, governance is about both structures and behaviour” (Goedegebuure et al. 2008: 146). These definitions, as well as the overall literature on the topic, frequently relate the word “management” with the concept here at stake. Maassen (2003) clarifies this distinction and states: “(...) management is about outcomes achievement and the monitoring of institutional effectiveness and efficiency in the distribution of resources (...)” (2003: 32). Another issue that stands out from the literature is the difference between the act of governing and the word governance, as a mean to explain that traditional ways of governing society, politics and economy have changed. Consequently, the development of this separation, as Magalhães and Amaral (2008) state, had important impacts in policy making. To clarify this difference, the authors argue that:

“Governing as political steering acquires its legitimacy directly from democratic procedures, ultimately from the election of people’s representatives. It is from the realm of ‘polity’ that the power to allocate resources to attain certain goals derives its legitimacy. Governance, in turn, represents the management of this allocation at the various levels, its implementation and evaluation. It develops within the realm of ‘policies’ under the aegis of government rule” (2008).

With respect to the higher education sector, and using Clark's triangle of coordination (1983) as an analytical tool, one can observe a redistribution of functions between centre and periphery. As De Boer and Goedegebuure (2003) state, "... it is simply no longer viable to 'run' a system from one national control centre, as again many of our European governments have discovered - sometimes to their chock and horror, sometimes to their relief" (2003: 209). At the turn of the new century, HEIs are pushed to be more competitive, more "self-regulated" and aware of the environments where they operate. Ideological shifts towards higher education as a private rather than a public good created the idea that the market steering mode of regulation allows for more responsiveness to society and a more efficient use of the public funds. In a climate where the state is *hollowing out* (Bovens, 't Hart and Peters 2001: 11) of its traditional role and where, more or less all around the world, higher education systems face financial stringencies, there is an increasingly louder discourse claiming for the necessity of accountability and quality assessment of the services provided by HEIs.

From the mid-1980s<sup>11</sup>, the transfer of authority, responsibility, and accountability can be analysed in three different directions:

"...vertical shifts can be observed from national to supranational public bodies such as the European Union, or from national to regional authorities, (...). Horizontally, shifts have taken place from public to semi public or private forms of governance, (...). An example of a mixed horizontal-vertical shift is the rise of international semi-public or private accreditation agencies..." (Cloete et al. 2005: 208-209).

Several reasons can be pointed for these shifts in governance modes. This needs to be understood not as a withdrawing of responsibilities, but as a redefinition of duties. Once institutions have gained more autonomy and freedom, governments search for new forms of steering their national higher education systems. Peters (2001) clearly exposes this new role of the *mediator* government by stating that "... no longer can governments impose their wills through legal instruments (...); they must now work to achieve something approaching consensus among a large group of self interested parties who have some influence over the policy" (Peters 2001: 8). Indeed, an increasing number of actors is having more influence on higher education policies, allowing a redistribution of power among different parts, such as

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<sup>11</sup> Gornitzka et al. (2005), as well as other researchers (Santiago, Magalhães and Carvalho 2005: 26), argue that from the 1980s, changes in public policy in higher education started to be evident (Gornitzka 2005: 48). The late 1980s and early 1990s are known as the rise of the Evaluative State period, where "(...) functions that previously were vested in government, are assigned to the individual institutions. The Evaluative State is linked to lump sum budgeting, contractual financing, greater margins of discretion in internal budget allocation within the university, the increasing importance of staff productivity and the means of verifying it, and the assignment of responsibility for 'strategic development' to institutional leadership and its supporting management" (de Boer and Goedegebuure 2003: 211).

ministries of education, industries and business and (inter)national bodies. This, together with globalisation, internationalisation and Europeanisation trends leads to the emergence of multi-level and multi-actor governance arrangements, creating networks of interdependent relationships, which influence agenda setting, decision-making and policy implementation in higher education (Enders 2004a). Enders (2004a) also mentions that the overall economic situation, combined with the massification of higher education, has changed policy styles obliging governments to decrease their public expenditures and search for mechanisms to increase effectiveness and efficiency. In turn, this growing concern with efficiency and responsiveness measures contributed to the emergence of NPM theories emphasising privatisation, deregulation and evaluation (Gornitzka et al. 2005). By questioning the efficiency of traditional public services, managerialism also questioned the established role of HEIs (Santiago, Magalhães and Carvalho 2005). In Portugal, this scenario started to be felt, though a little bit later, only in the late 1990s (Santiago and Carvalho 2004: 432). Managerialist tendencies in the country are explained according to several factors, as the authors refer. Among them one should highlight the pressures to change modes of knowledge, training and education production; the difficulties of the bureau-professional model to manage a mass system; the sustained decrease of the number of students and economic stringency; changes in regulation strategies and state control; self internal pressure, i.e., pressure self-induced and the neo-liberal policies developed by the government elected in 2002 (Santiago and Carvalho 2004: 432; Santiago et al. 2005: 27). Indeed, with respect to changes in state control, Portugal is presented as a hybrid higher education system, where, although HEIs hold institutional autonomy, the state retains its supervision role. In sum, it is argued that NPM represents a more rational way of governance, "... which combines economic, social and political aspects, using rational choice as the legitimating principle" (Santiago and Carvalho 2004: 429).

From the literature review on governance, in general, and governance of HEIs in particular, the topic stands as one of the most complex for analysis. For the purpose of the study, several things should be clear. First, understanding that the relationship that institutions maintain with governments are no longer only bilateral, but involve different levels and actors, all interconnected and with equal degree of importance. Moreover, growing concerns with excellence led to the proliferation of mechanisms for quality assurance and accreditation. Such government restructuring should be understood in the light of several factors, of which the massification of higher education and later on the prominence of international and European levels created an enormous complexity in system and institutional governance. This situation

is unsustainable for the state, being unable to cope alone with such a degree of complexity. Therefore, there is a need of power redistribution with all the consequences this might entail. We will now explore the other pieces of this conundrum.

## **2.4 Conceptual Framework**

Globalisation, internationalisation and Europeanisation have become key concepts, widely used in the higher education field. Though their meaning is often unclear and there are several interpretations and dimensions for them, much has been discussed on reform trends that go beyond national coordination. Higher education policy design takes increasingly into account global, international and European levels as fields of action and, internationalisation policies have been studied and discussed from several perspectives, according to the different objectives they aim at. Thus, a brief discussion of the general meaning and definitions of these concepts will be provided throughout this section<sup>12</sup>. Nevertheless, before exploring these concepts, it is worth to remember an aspect that changed higher education systems around the world: the massification of higher education and its growing demand. As Scott (1998) argues, there is a correspondence, a synergy between internationalisation and massification. The transition from an elite to a mass higher education system raised social and economic issues that once were not as relevant as nowadays. A growing concern with system, institutional and human diversity forced higher education systems to redefine their structural organisation and their governance modes. Simultaneously, and as referred above, HEIs seek for the best practices to attain excellence in the provision of their services, while trying to combine a huge number of students and attracting the best staff. In this sense, HEIs can be seen as global institutions that are faced with a changing environment in what social, economic, technological and scientific trends are concerned.

### **2.4.1 Globalisation, Internationalisation and Europeanisation of Higher Education**

As the process of internationalisation of higher education became clearer over the past decades, both in response to and in conjunction with the broader process of globalisation, (Santiago, Tremblay, Basri and Arnal 2008) the confusion in the terminology of both concepts

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<sup>12</sup> This analysis was mainly based on the previous works of Scott (1998); Enders (2004); Beerkens (2004); Altbach (2006) and Marginson and Wende (2007).

also started to be evident. In this way, it might be useful to clarify this distinction, even if there are not ideal forms of globalisation and internationalisation and the distinction between them is “... a dualistic over-simplification, that obscures from view both the differences between the two processes and the manner in which they feed each other (Marginson and Wende 2007: 11).

With respect to “globalisation”, Enders (2004) frames this process after the 1970s, by briefly referring the main changes since then:

“Globalisation sometimes seems a catch-all phrase or a non-concept, a catalogue of more or less everything that seems different since the 1970s: advances in information technology, greater capital flow across borders, international mobility of labour or of students, new public management and the weakening power of nation states, credit transfer in higher education and international recognition of degrees” (2004: 367).

However, as Marginson and Wende (2007) point out, although this process apparently refers to a broader concept than “internationalisation”, the “globalisation” phenomenon is not universal, once it acts differently according to the region, language and academic culture in question (2007: 5). In this sense, globalisation can be explained as a more “active”, a more “transformative” process than internationalisation once it interferes directly with the “... economic, culture and political core of nations” (2007: 11). However, the authors draw attention to the fact that its meaning should never be regarded as a higher form of internationalisation (2007: 12).

Altbach (2004), referring also to the process of globalisation, explains that, since the beginning of their existence, HEIs faced “... tensions between national realities and international trends” (2004: 5). As an example, the author compares the importance that English assumes nowadays in the academic field, with the predominance that once Latin, and latter on German, assumed. Thus, according to Altbach (2004), academic systems may accommodate these developments in different ways, but they cannot be ignored. Not even the idea that innovation and knowledge transformations circulate easily nowadays due to modern technology. In this sense, and returning to the starting point of the globalisation concept analysis (globalisation is not a universal phenomenon), one can easily recognise that “... the world of globalised higher education is highly unequal” (Altbach 2004: 6). Maassen and Cloete (2002) point also to the challenges that globalisation poses for the nation-state. Whether, on the one hand they are expected to create the conditions for economic and social development, predominantly through producing more and better educated citizens and increasing knowledge production, on the other hand, as it was mentioned in the previous section,

globalisation introduces pressures to reduce the role and contribution of governments in education. Therefore, "... the double-edged challenge is to produce more graduates with high-level knowledge skills, but with less direct government support per graduate" (2002: 30). Again, one of the main distinguishing factors when analysing both globalisation and internationalisation issues can be observed: the impossibility to remain unchangeable to globalisation trends and effects.

Contrary to the meaning of globalisation, which as it is suggested by Scott (1998), encourages the homogenisation of cultures, "internationalisation", by being more related to the role of the nation-state, is therefore seen as a very different concept. Indeed, Altbach (2004) states that "... internationalisation includes specific policies and programmes undertaken by governments, academic systems and institutions and even individual departments or institutions to cope with or exploit globalisation" (2004: 6). He explains that there is a certain freedom for institutions and governments to decide how to react, how to respond and to what extent they want to be involved in an increasingly globalised knowledge economy. When institutions decide they want to perform at the international level, it is a *voluntary* decision and they have much room for initiative. Thus, as it is stated by the author, "... while the forces of globalisation cannot be held completely at bay, it is not inevitable that countries or institutions will necessarily be overwhelmed by them or that the terms of the encounter must be dictated from afar" (2004: 6). Following Altbach (2004) arguments, Marginson and Wende (2007) explain that internationalisation should be understood in its literal sense, as inter-national, once the term itself "... refers to any relationship across borders between nations, or between single institutions situated within different national systems" (2007: 11). As a matter of fact, the idea that within the internationalisation sphere, the importance of the nation-state still plays a determinant role is very consensual among the authors. Faced with this *political reality*, as Enders (2004) calls it, the policy emphasis should be "... on the building of strategic international relationships, based on mutual co-operation and also on mutual observation" (2004: 367). In line with Enders' (2004) ideas, it is also interesting to analyse Scott's (1998) interpretations with respect to the international and global nature of universities. He states that although HEIs often see themselves as objects of globalisation they are also its agents. Nevertheless, universities were not always international institutions though they always had a character of *internationalism* (1998: 122). This is so, because the concept of nation-state only emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Before that time, only *territories* existed, not nation-states in the way we assume their existence today. In this way, universities had first to

become national institutions before they became international<sup>13</sup>. However, the development of mass higher education does not avoid international exchanges. The flow of ideas, of knowledge will certainly always exist.

In distinguishing between both concepts, Enders (2004) takes into account the redefinition of economic relationships around the world. He affirms that in contrast with internationalisation, the process of globalisation is related “... with a restructuring of the nation state, through the deregulation of legal and financial controls, the opening of markets or quasi-markets (including in higher education), and the increasing primacy of notions of competition, efficiency and managerialism” (2004: 367).

Another important point that stands out from the literature concerning the debate “internationalisation vs. globalisation” is the evolution in the definition and meaning of the word *internationalisation*. The range of internationalisation activities that HEIs are willing to do today goes far beyond students’ and academics’ mobility. As an example, one can see these developments in the increasing number of programmes taught in English; research cooperation activities; the internationalisation of the curriculum, the multinationalisation<sup>14</sup> of higher education (joint programmes and curricula); improvements in the ways of higher education delivery (blended learning programmes due to the technological “revolution”); scholarship programmes (ERASMUS and SOCRATES) and new international agreements (as an example, the Bologna process)<sup>15</sup> (Altbach 2004). Indeed, one can observe that both HEIs and governments have been using these different approaches to internationalise, in order to respond to “... the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness” (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton 1999: 2 *in* Marginson and Wende 2007: 5). As both concepts encompass multiple meanings, and “... the process of internationalisation in higher education cannot be interpreted independently of the parallel process of globalisation in the economic and social sphere” (Santiago et al. 2008: 236), it is actually easier to distinguish them through the identification of their similarities and differences. As Knight (2001) describes, “one can think of globalisation as the catalyst, but of internationalisation as the response, albeit a proactive response.”

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<sup>13</sup> Scott (1998) explains that it was only in 1648 with the landmark Treaty of Westphalia that the concept of nation state was born. “Most universities are not ancient institutions with links that go back unbroken to the Middle Ages. (...) Most universities whether founded by a sixteenth-century king or duke or by a nineteenth- or twentieth-century democracy, are creatures, because they are creations of the nation state (Scott 1998: 110)”.

<sup>14</sup> Altbach (2004) explains that the multinationalisation of higher education emerged from a global education market place in the form of a variety of multinational higher education initiatives (Altbach 2004: 16).

<sup>15</sup> The next section aims to explore the relationship between the emergence of “new internationalisation” policies (Europeanisation) and the Bologna process.



Throughout this text, the use of the word “internationalisation” stands for the international activities and means of delivery of education to other countries through international collaboration and engagement. It involves multilateral cooperation agreements among institutions and their governments. Alternatively, the term globalisation refers to a much more complex and dynamic process of interconnectedness of higher education markets on a planetary scale. Its various dimensions (economic, technological and scientific) operate synchronously, influencing HEIs’ dynamics of organisation and governance. Both phenomena are facilitated by a great development in the ICT, especially evident in the last decades.

Different from globalisation and internationalisation, but equally relevant and related to the topic of this study, is the concept of “Europeanisation”. This fashionable but contested term (Olsen 2002) started to emerge when shifts in relations of dominance became a reality. Thus, as can be read in Olsen’s article, in the same way that the concept of “Americanisation” gained relevance, the term “Europeanisation” has been assuming prominence as changes in an established hegemony have been taking place and Europe is playing a more central role at the global scene (2002: 926).

More specifically, and within the higher education field, “Europeanisation”, as a relatively new concept, is extremely connected to the expression *knowledge economy* and also to international cooperation and mobility agreements. As Marginson and Wende (2007) state, this term has its origins “... in the explicit commitment to a common European higher education zone in order to facilitate such international activities within Europe” (2007: 12). Nevertheless, one of the implications of this process is that Europeanisation implies a gradual de-nationalisation and integration of certain regulatory systems (Beerkens 2004). Following Beerkens ideas, Luijten-Lub (2006) sees Europeanisation as a smaller phenomenon of internationalisation. In the same way that HEIs choose different international strategies to play in a global environment, so the nation-states do in order to enhance their attractiveness in the European area. However, this is not a linear process and it raises a contentious debate about whether higher education should remain completely under the nation-state’s responsibility or under European/international orientations.

In order to better understand how the term can be fruitfully used when analysing institutional dynamics occurring among higher education systems, it is essential to clarify what is changing at the European level and how this process takes place. The next section attempts

to introduce an analysis to these issues, while underpinning the motivations for the emergence of the Bologna process in this context of global change.

### **2.4.2 Europeanisation and European Integration**

There are certain means of coordination that a nation-state has to steer its higher education system. As policy instruments, there are legal and funding rules to determine the organisational structure of each system; several standards, namely those concerning with quality issues; information and “socialisation” principles, which can be defined as the different roles each group performs within a higher education system (students, professors, rectors, ministers). The European Union (EU) has also its own structured means of cooperation among member states. As Gornitzka (2008) explains, the political framework of the EU is based on five main institutions, of which the European Commission assumes especial relevance for the purpose of this study, once it is seen as the motor of European integration.

The EU uses a mixed, or what is called a hybrid mode of governance to deal with different sectors of policy areas. Thus, one can find traditional intergovernmental cooperation, which works together with supranational institutions. These institutions, as the author refers, position the nation-state as its core centre of activity, but they also cope with the EU as a whole entity. Indeed, as Gornitzka (2008) argues what makes the EU such an important and especial organisation is “(...) its strong legal focus that one will not find in any international cooperation organisation in the world”. Therefore, it is not surprising that, as the EU wins more power and higher external dimension, especially in what drafting legislation and policy implementation is concerned, the concept of Europeanisation assumes greater importance and several interpretations, although it is difficult to find an accurate definition for it (Olsen 2002). According to Olsen (2002), in order to understand the concept of Europeanisation, one has to go through their different phenomena, to analyse what is changing, how these changes are taking place and why this happens (2002: 923-924). By analysing what is changing, he identifies five possible answers for the questions “what is Europeanisation?” and “what is changing?” (2002: 923-924). He firstly mentions changes in external boundaries, especially with the geographical expansion of the EU. European boundaries are increasingly wider, and with the Bologna declaration the definition of Europe is even larger. Indeed, the enlargement of the European space has been a recurrent process (2002: 927). A second factor is related to the process of developing institutions at the European level, with some degree of coordination

and coherence among them (2002: 923). With respect to higher education, one can look at the construction of the EHEA and to the subsequent creation of quality agencies, as a kind of Europeanisation of the higher education sector (Gornitzka 2008). The central penetration of national systems of governance appears as the third explanation of this phenomenon. This means that, although higher education issues are usually decided at the national and local levels, European systems became increasingly similar; their regulation frameworks are more similar to European guidelines than specifically national ones. Therefore, as Olsen (2002) argues, all multilevel systems need to find a balance between unity and diversity, central coordination and local autonomy (2002: 924). This issue has been raising a huge debate about the increasingly convergence of higher education systems, leading to a decline of systematic and institutional diversity within European countries, especially after the introduction of the Bologna process<sup>16</sup>. Related with this issue, Olsen (2002) mentions another factor for these changes, namely the exporting forms of political organisation from Europe to other regions, distinct from the European territory. This helps to understand the growing emphasis on Europeanisation issues and how Europe finds a place in a larger world order. The last argument, "... the degree to which Europe is becoming a more unified and stronger political entity (...)" (2002: 924) is related with the four aspects aforementioned, and which position Europe as a project of political unification. Thus, once this concept is understood, it should allow for the analysis and comparison of the European dynamics and other higher education systems' forms of governance (Olsen 2002: 922).

How to understand institutional change and continuity within the European context (*how* Europeanisation takes place) requires an understanding of the structure and dynamics of each change process. Olsen (2002) explains that there are complex mixed models to explain these processes, according to each factor aforementioned. As an example, he refers that "Europeanisation as a political unification involves institutional mutual adaptation". The neo-institutional perspective explains how HEIs and actors co-evolve as they adapt to each other and to the environment where they operate, finding in this way a place in the changing political order (2002: 925). In a complex and multi-actor environment as the European one, one can say that there is a *balance* in power distribution. This is diluted among the different actors according to the nature of the policy to implement and their aims, and there is also a certain degree of freedom in its implementation, as it is the case of the Bologna process.

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<sup>16</sup> Though this situation has occurred in many countries, Portugal did not follow the convergence trends. This will be further analysed in chapter V.

Indeed, when referring to the implementation process at the institutional level (and according to the aforementioned theoretical framework) HEIs have freedom to use their resources, namely institutional autonomy, in order to influence the implementation process and therefore obtain what they perceive as better for them. As Veiga and Amaral (2006) argue, "... the reactions of HEIs to internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation could be understood as organisational performance and environmental responses in the sense that HEIs can influence their institutional environment" (2006: 288).

One can observe a growing concern from the EU to develop strong policies covering all the European members. Nonetheless, education is still an area strongly embedded in the nation-state policy framework, and this explains, in part, the difficulty in developing policies at the European level. In this sense, building the EHEA encompasses the European ambition of transforming Europe in the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world (Lisbon Strategy). Underlying this aim is the idea and efforts of growing Europeanisation and integration of national policies. Indeed, as Veiga and Amaral (2006) explain, "... under this strategy, a stronger economy will drive job creation alongside social and environmental policies to ensure sustainable development and social inclusion. This proposal allows the EU to promote the European dimension of education and training policies" (2006: 283). In this renewed Europeanisation context, knowledge assumes paramount importance in order to attain economic growth and global competitiveness (Marginson and Wende 2007: 10). But this, as Gornitzka (2008) explains, cannot be done without bringing the different knowledge sectors to Europe, not even without fostering research initiatives.

Knowledge is the legitimate concern of the European common efforts, and therefore is the basis of the overall aims of the Lisbon Strategy: economic and the social aspects. These both dimensions aim to translate the political definition of the *knowledge-based economy*, so important for the construction of the new Europe, and, as Veiga and Amaral (2006) state, "... to some extent, institutional policies of Europeanisation have been strongly driven by the intrinsic internationalisation character of scientific knowledge, which might have contributed to balance the influence of the academic rationale over the economic rationale" (2006: 290). The emphasis on the acquisition of competences as the engine of the knowledge-based economy has an impact on the way HEIs are governed and steered. In the following chapter, one will analyse the policy process behind the idea of coordination of the Bologna process.

### **3. The Bologna Process**

The main interest of this study is to understand how the Portuguese government dealt with the challenges that the Bologna process created in the national higher education system, more specifically in its structure. Additionally, it aims to understand how HEIs reacted to these initiatives. This requires a previous acknowledgment of the context that grounded the emergence of the Bologna declaration. Therefore, this chapter aims to contextualise Bologna within the Europeanisation dynamics of higher education, as well as to understand the directions and means it has been using in its development. Towards this end, particular attention was paid to the Sorbonne (1998), Bologna (1999) and Prague (2001) declarations as they paved the way for the construction of the EHEA. Thus, reforms are taking place to make the higher education systems of the signatory countries more competitive, which means, becoming more similar to the undergraduate and graduate Anglo-American system.

It is also interesting to analyse how the EU has increasingly evolved into the Bologna process. This, obviously, has consequences for policy design at all levels of action where the process operates, especially at a time when the number of participatory countries increase, and thereby, provide to this process a high degree of complexity, "... which does not fit into the idea of clear, rational and linear policy implementation of the EU" (Veiga and Amaral 2006: 286). However, it is, in fact, fascinating to observe how the European higher education environment has evolved since the Magna Charta Universitatum to the ministerial conference in Leuven (28-29 April 2009).

#### **3.1 Twenty years after the Magna Charta Universitatum**

"The undersigned Rectors of European Universities (...) looking forward to far-reaching co-operation between all European nations and believing that peoples and States should become more than ever aware of the part that universities will be called upon to play in a changing and increasingly international society, (...) proclaim to all States and to the conscience of all nations the fundamental principles which must, now and always, support the vocation of universities:

1. The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organized because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching. To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power (...)" (Magna Charta Universitatum 1988: 1-2).

More than twenty years passed since the Magna Charta Universitatum was signed on the 18<sup>th</sup> September of 1988 to mark the 900 years since the founding of the University of Bologna. Many would say that one was far from imagining what would happen in the coming years in the global higher education scenario; others would say that, what happened ten years latter in Sorbonne was a natural consequence of a common wish. Apart from that, it is acknowledged that many things have changed and the environment where HEIs operate nowadays is challenging enough not to be taken into consideration when it comes to analyse national policy formulation and the impact this has on society.

The Magna Charta Universitatum formally stated the importance of universities and introduced some principles for the process of *far-reaching co-operation* among all European nations (*ibid*). It mainly refers to the notions of freedom and intellectual independence and inseparability of research and teaching in the day-to-day activities of universities. The document has become the reference for the fundamental values and principles of the university and to date, some 600 universities have signed it.

Following this document, the Sorbonne declaration (1998) introduced the ideas of what latter would be the Bologna declaration, and therefore the ideals for the construction of “... an open European area for higher learning, in which we must strengthen and build upon the intellectual, cultural, social and technical dimensions of our continent” (Sorbonne Declaration 1998). Indeed, as it is stated in this document, it is a declaration on the “... harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system” (*ibid*), and it was signed by the four ministers in charge of higher education in France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom<sup>17</sup>. The construction of this common area should be achieved trough several measures, emphasising an increase in mobility; the existence of a common two cycle degree structure (“graduate” and “undergraduate”), which should be internationally recognisable and easily comparable<sup>18</sup>; incentives and supports for those who wish to access higher education at any time in their lives (lifelong learning) and the use of an European Credit Transfer System (ECTS - which already existed in ERASMUS and SOCRATES programmes) for the compatibility of the systems.

With respect to the degree structure of two-cycles, *collateral lectures* of the Sorbonne declaration, put forward the French structure as the model of organisation. Nevertheless, the

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<sup>17</sup> In 1998 these ministers were: Claude Allegre (France); Luigi Berlinguer (Italy); Tessa Blackstone (United Kingdom) and Jürgen Rüttgers (Germany).

<sup>18</sup> “(...) a system, in which two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate, should be recognized for international comparison and equivalence, seems to emerge” (Sorbonne Declaration 1998).

ministers do not mention any numbers concerning the length of the degree structure, only the expression *cycles*, as the French higher education system is organised in three cycles. Furthermore, words such as “harmonisation” tended to be interpreted as curricular “standardisation” within the signatory countries (Witte 2006: 127)<sup>19</sup>. Nevertheless, the EU Rectors’ Conferences and the Association of European Universities (CRE<sup>20</sup> 2000) were very clear in this respect. They state that “The Bologna process aims at creating convergence and, thus, is not a path towards the ‘standardisation’ or ‘uniformisation’ of European higher education. The fundamental principles of autonomy and diversity are respected” (2000: 3).

The Sorbonne declaration is concluded with the four ministers calling on other EU members to join them in achieving their objectives. This invitation was enthusiastically received by the European counterparts, who signed the Bologna declaration one year later.

### 3.2 From Sorbonne to Bologna

Before its signature on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 1999, the Bologna declaration was previously prepared by a group composed at a meeting of the EU Directors-Generals of higher education (Witte 2006: 131). The preparatory documents (*Project Report - Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education*<sup>21</sup>) provided overall information about the structure of the national systems of higher education. It was intended to be a tool for the 29 ministers to compare differences concerning the organisation of each higher education system. However, despite the invitation in Sorbonne being eagerly accepted by the 29 members of the EU, the conference in Bologna made clear the difficulty in achieving consensus among the signatory countries, especially in the specific details of the implementation of the two main cycles of studies. The Bologna process is composed by a set of reform procedures aimed at creating until 2010 the EHEA, in which students would be able to choose from a wide range of European quality courses and benefit from smooth recognition procedures. Having the ideals of the Magna Charta Universitatum as a background, it refers to the independence and autonomy of universities as essential factors to pursue HEIs mission. It highlights the need of

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<sup>19</sup> Other interpretations of the document suggest that, the fact that only four of the biggest European countries signed the Sorbonne declaration created a certain kind of “marginalisation” idea concerning to the other countries that were not previously consulted about these ideas (Witte 2006; Lourtie 2008).

<sup>20</sup> CRE stands for the old Association of European Universities. The present European Universities Association (EUA) is a result of a merger between the former CRE and the Confederation of European Union Rectors’ Conferences. This took place in Salamanca on the 31 March 2001.

<sup>21</sup> In: [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/OFFDOC\\_BP\\_trend\\_I.1068715136182.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/OFFDOC_BP_trend_I.1068715136182.pdf)

making higher education in Europe attractive and competitive by achieving compatibility and comparability among the different national systems. It concluded by referring that this needs to be attained through complete respect for the diversity of cultures and university autonomy. In this way, the Bologna process is considered to be the most comprehensive university reform in recent years, based on intergovernmental cooperation, HEIs, students and staff from 46 countries, with the participation of international organisations<sup>22</sup>. As one might expect, from the quantity of actors involved and their nature, it is not easy to agree on specific criteria to attain the objectives established in the declaration. Nonetheless, as the European Association for International Education (EAIE, November 1999) refers, due to its peculiar character, not only the declaration contributes for the European educational development, but also allows for a “... supple policy environment for pursuing issues of institutional autonomy” (EAIE 1999). This is possible due to the peculiar nature of the agreement, which is “... neither a form of European directive nor an international agreement in the conventional sense” (EAIE 1999). It is thus an intergovernmental agreement in which member states are free to endorse or reject the principles of the process, although the effect of “international peer pressure” should not be underestimated (Council of Europe). This is a common process at the European level. As Marginson and Wende (2007) explain, for the EU as a whole, with the European Commission being a major policy actor, the way in which individual countries respond to these policy initiatives can be quite diverse (2007: 45). Indeed, the non-binding character of the process was a facilitator to overcome reluctance in Europe towards standardisation and harmonisation (2007: 46). Moreover, the supranational character of the Bologna process “... triggered a restructuring of academic programmes to enhance comparability and mutual recognition of tertiary qualifications among countries (...) which national actors would not otherwise have undertaken. As a result of this international pressure, most European systems have restructured their tertiary education delivery, or are in the process of doing so” (Santiago et al. 2008: 316).

At the conference in Bologna, the 29 Ministers of Education agreed upon the following six action lines:

- Adoption of a system of **easily readable and comparable degrees**, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens

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<sup>22</sup> There are eight consultative members involved in the process, namely the Council of Europe, the UNESCO's European Centre for Higher Education, the European University Association, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, the European Students' Union, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, the Education International Pan-European Structure, and the BUSINESSEUROPE: [http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/about/how\\_it\\_works.htm](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/about/how_it_works.htm)



employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system.

- Adoption of a system essentially based on **two main cycles**, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries.
- Establishment of a **system of credits** - such as in the ECTS system – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility (...).
- Promotion of **mobility** by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement (...).
- Promotion of **European co-operation in quality assurance** with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies; and
- Promotion of the **necessary European dimensions in higher education**, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research (Bologna declaration 1999, emphasis in the document itself).

Despite the Bologna declaration clearly stating that these objectives should be pursued “... within the framework of national competences and taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of university autonomy” (Bologna declaration), in practice, this demands a change in the way HEIs relate with their national governments. As a bottom-up initiative, the ministries of education tried to adapt their national structures to the Bologna reality, which means new forms “... of intergovernmental co-operation, together with those of nongovernmental European organisations with competence on HE (Bologna declaration). In many countries, this meant profound changes and a long process of adaptation to a new model of organisation, as it was the case of Portugal. One of the most challenging measures to adopt in Portugal, as in other continental European higher education systems, which used to have longer cycles of studies, is the implementation of a system essentially based on two shorter main cycles.

### 3.3 From Bologna to Prague

Between June 1999 and May 2001, it was established a system for reviewing the progress achieved and to set directions and priorities for the coming years of the Bologna process (Prague Communiqué 2001)<sup>23</sup>. The BFUG was formed. This group was initially composed of

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<sup>23</sup> Before the meeting in Prague, the signatory countries organised the so-called *Bologna Seminars*. Among them are the Salamanca Convention (*Message from the Salamanca Convention of European Higher Education Institutions - Shaping the European Higher Education Area*), which was held in March 2001 and brought together more than 300 HEIs and the Seminar Lisbon-Oeiras (*Towards Accreditation Schemes for Higher Education in Europe*), held in February 2001. The

representatives of all participant states of the Bologna process plus the European Commission, the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences and the CRE. In 2000, the group accepted the Council of Europe, EURASHE (European Association of Institutions in Higher Education) and ESIB (National Unions of Students in Europe) as observers<sup>24</sup> (Witte 2006: 133). Thereby, as the author refers, the ministers decided that the Ministerial meetings should take place every two years, and the first was held in Prague, in May 2001. In the meantime, a general rapporteur for the BFUG was selected. This was Mr. Pedro Lourtie, who later became Deputy Minister of Education in Portugal (interviewed). His task was to monitor the implementation of the objectives of the Bologna declaration and report on this to the Ministers of Education in Prague. In Prague, the ministers stressed their wishes about the full participation of non-EU countries from Central and Eastern Europe in the process (Witte 2006: 133). Thereby, after Prague, more four countries (Croatia, Cyprus, Liechtenstein and Turkey) joined the process. From this meeting, emerged the Prague declaration, *Towards the European Higher Education Area*, which reaffirms the importance of creating a common area for higher education and it added to the process the following actions:<sup>25</sup>

- **Lifelong learning** is an essential element of the EHEA in order to address economic competitiveness;
- **The involvement of HEIs and students**; the Ministers underline the importance of the involvement of universities, of other higher education establishments and in particular of students in order to create a constructive EHEA;
- **Promote the attractiveness** of the EHEA among students in Europe and in other parts of the world.

It is interesting to observe how the Prague declaration evolved and corrected some aspects since the Bologna declaration was signed, namely in what clarity of expression is concerned. As an example, and as it is observed by the EAIE's comment (1999), the use of the terms "European area" and "European system" portray different meanings and feelings, although in the Bologna declaration they were used indifferently. As the Association refers, the set of objectives required to achieve a European area are different from those to achieve a European system. "This is a crucial distinction" (EAIE 1999). Therefore, efforts were made to promote the development of the EHEA. In addition, the second action line of the Prague communiqué also advances the Bologna declaration. It refers to those higher education

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European University Association developed the Trends II report - report on the implementation of the Bologna declaration at the institutional level (Council of Europe website).

<sup>24</sup> EURASHE is the umbrella organisation of non-university HEIs in Europe. ESIB is the umbrella organisation of about 50 national student organisations in 37 European countries (Witte 2006: 133).

<sup>25</sup> *Ir*: <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11088.htm>, emphasis on the document itself.

systems where both “... bachelor's and master's degrees, or comparable two cycle degrees, can be obtained at universities as well as at other higher education institutions” (Prague Communiqué 2001: 2), such as the Portuguese case. In this situation, it was recognised that “programmes leading to a degree may, and indeed should, have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs (...)” (2001: 2).

In March 2000, before the meeting in Prague, the EU promoted one of the most significant events in this journey, which was held in Portugal: the Lisbon process, which would be known as the Lisbon Strategy. At this meeting, the heads of state of the EU established the aim to transform Europe in “... the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010 and stressed the importance of education and training in this regard” (Witte 2006: 134).

In September 2003, Berlin held the following Ministerial Conference, where seven new countries were accepted into the process and the tenth official objective was introduced. This relates to the importance of research, including doctorate studies and synergies between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA) in the Bologna process. Moreover, it was defined that in time for the 2005 meeting, ministers would take stock of progress in key areas, as quality assurance, the two-cycle system and the recognition of degrees and periods of study. It was also decided that all country members of the European Cultural Convention were eligible to take part in the Bologna process provided they applied for accession and submitted a satisfactory plan for implementation of the Bologna goals in their higher education system<sup>26</sup>.

At the Bergen Ministerial Conference in May 2005, five new countries were welcomed in the process, increasing the total number of participating members up to 45. As the Council of Europe explains, at the Bergen summit, the practical implementation of the last action lines introduced was confirmed. Thereby, issues concerning quality gained a renewed importance with the implementation of references and guidelines to guarantee quality (as proposed by ENQA). It was adopted the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG), allowing for a substantial improvement in external quality assurance.

In May 2007, London held the following Ministerial summit. Montenegro was welcomed as new participating country. Continuing the Bologna action lines, it was agreed on a strategy for the Bologna process in a global context, as well as on the reinforcement of the social dimension of the process. Following the progress achieved in Bergen concerning quality

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<sup>26</sup> In: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/EHEA2010/BolognaPedestrians\\_en.asp#P132\\_13851](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/EHEA2010/BolognaPedestrians_en.asp#P132_13851)

issues, in London it was decided to set up a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies, with the objective “... to allow all stakeholders and the general public open access to objective information about trustworthy quality assurance agencies that are working in line with the ESG. It will therefore enhance confidence in higher education in the EHEA and beyond, and facilitate the mutual recognition of quality assurance and accreditation decisions” (London Communiqué 2007: 4).

### 3.4 The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy

Van der Wende (1997) defined internationalisation in higher education as:

Any systematic, sustained effort aimed at making higher education (more) responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalisation of societies, economy, and labour markets (1997: 19 *in* Luijten-Lub 2007: 34).

Therefore, one can look at the Bologna process as a response to globalisation and internationalisation challenges, which is shaped by different driving forces: cooperation vs. competition and national vs. European strategies (Lourtie 2008). These forces have raised major debates concerning the restructuring of the different systems of higher education, but they are not particularly new. The Magna Charta Universitatum called for cooperation among institutions, and, in this sense, the Bologna process continues this purpose through support of student mobility programmes. Nevertheless, the Bologna declaration, in addition to cooperation, also calls nations to dynamically “... face the challenges of the new millennium” (*ibid*). It aims to find answers to common European problems, at a time when Europe needs to find sustainable solutions for the continuous growth of higher education, the employability of its graduates, the shortage of skills in key areas, the expansion of private and transnational education, etc. (Confederation of EU Rectors’ Conferences and CRE 2000: 3). As Marginson and Wende explain (2007), this is clearly a response to the fact that Europe has lost its prominence as the number one destination for foreign students and researchers to the United States (US), mainly due to the fact that European graduates entered the labour market at an older age than American graduates do (2007: 45). In this sense, the EU developed several initiatives to tackle this situation.

The growing involvement of the European Commission in the Bologna process became more solid with the Lisbon Strategy, providing the Commission “... with an important political mandate in the area of education policy, though this was not supported by

any extended legal power” (Marginson and Wende 2007: 46). Indeed, throughout the developments of the Bologna process, the linkage with the EU grew stronger and this brought some confusion and criticisms by several authors, who view this *intrusion* “... as increasingly undermining the sovereignty of the nation-state” (Amaral and Neave 2008). On the one hand, and as one can read on the Bologna website, the involvement of the European Commission in the process is a factor for its success. At least, the financial support represents an important help. As Wit (2007) refers, the EU finances the follow up of the Bologna process and since the meeting in Prague it has been part of the Follow-Up Group monitoring the Bologna reforms. Moreover, it contributes to the Bologna implementation by providing funds for transnational projects (2007: 248)<sup>27</sup>. On the other hand, several researchers defend that, the EU only entered in this process because it aims to extend its policies and intentions beyond its borders. Therefore, as it was aforementioned, it is argued that the Bologna process is not something completely new, but rather an enlargement of the EU policy scope of action. As Wit (2007) explains, the goals of the Bologna declaration such as strengthening the European dimension in higher education and stimulating student mobility are similar to the goals of the EU cooperation in higher education (Wit 2007: 249). The author also argues that whether one compares the Bologna declaration with the EU programmes on higher education, one will find that, though presenting slight differences, both texts are closely linked. Indeed, looking at the ERASMUS and SOCRATES programmes, we will find that the purpose of increasing mobility and the emphasis on cooperation were present long time ago, since the medieval times (Scott 1998). Nevertheless, it was the Bologna declaration (and not any EU’s programme) which introduced the objective to establish a system essentially based on three main cycles among the signatory countries. Wit (2007) explains that:

“This has to do with the way in which the goals set out for the EU should or can be reached. The EU must ‘support and complement’ Member States’ actions, with ‘full respect’ for the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of educational systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity” (Wit 2007: 249).

The debate concerning whether the Bologna process is something really new or not is interesting to institutional change theories, once it can provide information about how HEIs reacted in the past when confronted with certain issues. Guy Neave, for example, sees the

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<sup>27</sup> Witte (2006: 134) reaffirms this idea by stating that the role of the EU in the Bologna process was further strengthened by the establishment in March 2000 of the European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), funded initially by the European Commission through the Socrates programme.

Bologna process as a continuity of the reforms initiated by member states. Moreover, the debate on the novelty of the process might help to understand why some countries decided to join Bologna and others not, and *extrapolate* outcomes from previous reforms, as Ann Corbett did (Amaral and Neave 2008). Apart from this, it is undeniable that both the Bologna process and the Lisbon Strategy

“... are the main frameworks guiding the European response to globalisation in higher education. Although they emerged in very different ways (bottom-up versus top-down) and could be characterised as intergovernmental (Bologna) versus supranational (Lisbon), they seemed to converge slowly into one over-arching approach” (Marginson and Wende 2007: 46).

Indeed, the Lisbon Strategy works differently from the Bologna process, once it was designed by the European Commission at supra-national level and, though its implementation considers multi-actors' interests, it uses a more top-down perspective. However, as the aforementioned authors explain, since the formal competences of the European Commission in the area of education policy have not been enlarged, the Bologna process cannot be completely characterised as a top-down initiative, but rather as bottom-up, due to the limited competences of the Commission in the field of higher education policy (2007: 46). Moreover, the instruments it uses are not EU directives, but take the form of recommendations, communications, consultations, or other working documents (2007: 49). This new way of governing goes beyond the “visible hand of the public authority” (Enders 2004), which means, beyond the nation-state, and at the same time, without relying on the traditional EU means of control. The Lisbon Strategy paved the way for the EU set forth the method that would be used to coordinate the Bologna process and thereby, the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) was for the first time applied in the education field.

The next section aims to explore a different policy tool, the OMC, within the implementation of the Bologna framework, as well as, the rationale behind its use and its main criticisms.

### **3.4.1 The Lisbon Strategy and the Open Method of Coordination**

With the launching of the Lisbon Strategy, the higher education sector in general and HEIs in particular became the centre of attention within the EU (Gornitzka 2007). Indeed, as

Veiga and Amaral (2008) refer, "... the Lisbon strategy has the EU hallmark that was initially absent from the Bologna process".<sup>28</sup>

In order to achieve the objectives agreed in Lisbon and, simultaneously, to coordinate the various levels of interaction under which Bologna operates, the overall process has increasing recourse to the tools of the OMC (Amaral and Neave 2008). This, as Gornitzka (2007) explains "... offered the member states and the EU institutions a template for coordinate public policies within the EU that in principle would not upset the balance between the nation states and the supranational level" (2007: 155). In this sense, and as Veiga and Amaral (2008) clarify,

"The OMC sets routines for comparisons and organises a learning process at European level to promote exchange and emulation of best practices that will help member states to improve their own policies. In the absence of legal constraints or formal policy coordination, the OMC coordination capacity is based upon a set of external constraints for the national authorities."

These characteristics of this method have led to include the OMC into "soft law" procedures in opposition to the traditional and common "hard law" methods of the EU. Despite this might sound as a weird policy implementation method, especially in the higher education field, there is a clear rationale for its implementation. As a matter of fact, though the objectives that both the Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy entail are different in nature, they are *intentionally* broad, with a non binding character, as a means of achieving consensus among so many countries. With respect to the Bologna process, Amaral and Neave (2008) refer that:

"Bologna was to be carried forward by using 'soft law' procedures, which allowed each country to decide how to fulfil the agreed objectives. Each country would draw up a new legal framework that both provided for the implementation of Bologna and at the same time took account of national agendas and the unique characteristics of each higher education system."

Thereby, as Gornitzka (2008) explains, having a different kind of governance "style" would imply that one would be able to enter in areas that previously were much more difficult to access (e.g. higher education) because they were protected by the treaties of the Union, i.e. they were reserved for the sole political action of individual member states. Furthermore, having a different kind of coordination, that does not completely rely on harmonisation, should enable a more respectful attitude towards national system diversity, which is seen as a problem, when one wants to implement harmonisation policies.

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<sup>28</sup> When the four ministers responsible for higher education in France, Germany, Italy and the UK joined in Sorbonne, and one year later in Bologna to sign (together with more 25 ministers) the Bologna declaration, no European institutions were involved.

The origins of the OMC go back to the year of 1994 when, in connection with the development of the Monetary Union, the European Council decided to monitor national developments (by analysing indicators as growth, competitiveness and employment), leading to the establishment of common objectives and surveillance by the European Commission and member states (Schäfer 2004). Later on, in the year 2000, it was decided during the Lisbon Treaty to extend the OMC to other fields, namely "... information society, research, innovation, enterprise policy, education and social exclusion" (Veiga and Amaral 2006: 285). Thus, one should ask what kind of implications are tangled with the use of this method in the higher education field. Certainly, it represents a different approach to the traditional hard law as a means of coordination and integration policies at different levels for different actors. According to Gornitzka (2008), this type of law is little effective because it is too cumbersome and legalistic. Indeed, as Veiga and Amaral (2006) previously referred, "... policy implementation in higher education is non-linear, and therefore, the use of soft law mechanisms such as the OMC, is not effective when national governments have their own policies" (2006: 292). In this sense, and despite its interesting theoretical approaches, it is common to find in the literature related with this topic, several critics concerning its use in general and its implementation in the higher education field more specifically. A brief tentative analysis to its main critiques will be provided.

The OMC goes through several steps, being implemented in stages. The first one is the definition of common objectives to guide national policy (Régent 2002). Then, one needs to fix guidelines and set timetables in order to achieve the goals previously established. A third stage when implementing this tool, and which has been widely criticised, is the establishment of indicators and benchmarks as means of comparing best practices (Gornitzka 2008). Finally, the outcomes achieved are monitored and evaluated. The last principle underlying this process is actually a set of joint techniques, such as the periodic monitoring and evaluation and peer review, organised as a mutual learning process. The aim is to monitor and evaluate the process periodically through other member states in order to learn from each other (Gornitzka 2008), as the BFUG is supposed to do. Interesting is the fact that, as Veiga and Amaral (2008) refer, the sanctions for those countries which performed poorly relies on a kind of peer pressure, by "naming and shaming" those who did not attain the goals. Nevertheless, other authors might have different interpretations concerning the use of benchmarks. Rodrigues (2006) explains that this methodology "... does not aim to rank the Member States..." but it works as a kind of guideline, which encourages states to create European dimension and to adapt them to



national diversity. As Régent (2002) argues, “Lisbon strengthened the logic of mutual learning, benchmarking, best practice and peer pressure to achieve objectives” (2002: 5).

The OMC represents thus a new paradigm of governance, which was not entirely based on a top-down perspective. It is rather a “... middle way between intergovernmental negotiations and mutual adjustment (...), a coordination mechanism without economic sanction” (Gornitzka 2008), being in this way, more flexible and, at least ideally, more respectful towards system diversity. However, doubts can be raised concerning its real effectiveness in achieving common European goals and benchmarks inherent to its own creation and implementation. As a matter of fact, the main critique of this soft approach is the excessive number of 29 performance indicators to translate very broad goals (Gornitzka 2008). This, in turn, will lead to an ambiguous procedure of policy design and subsequent implementation. Furthermore, the author also argues that the objectives are much more directed at other levels of education than higher education. Thus, there are possible areas of tension when developing this kind of cooperation policies. Veiga and Amaral (2006) referred that “... the OMC does not allow for the level of coordination necessary for the coherent implementation of a process that depends on a multitude of local agents (the HEIs) with diverse strategies, perceptions, interest and objectives” (2006: 292).

In sum, it is difficult to explore the boundaries between cooperation and competition and between divergence and convergence. To what extent is it possible to have coordination among three different levels of action? Until when does cooperation cease to give rise to competition? And, to what extent convergence policies should be reinforced? Probably, the time frame does not yet allow a coherent answer to these questions, although one can see some gaps in this policy. Due to its soft nature, it is largely argued that national governments are using Bologna “... as a lever for the implementation of national agendas” (Veiga and Amaral 2006: 288), which probably national actors would not otherwise have undertaken alone (Santiago et al. 2008: 236).

The following section tries to provide some information on these points, while it discusses some possible impacts of the Bologna process in binary systems.

### **3.5 Bologna, a challenge for binary systems?**

Marginson and Wende (2007) argue that Europeanisation encompasses both processes of European integration and consequently intra-European cooperation. The Bologna process

is, as it was mentioned above, an “outcome” of internationalisation challenges. In this sense, it is shaped by different driving forces which aim to enhance the overall competitiveness of the EHEA in the world. Convergence and divergence trends, as the authors refer, tend to work differently, but they both pursue the overall aim of Bologna. The idea of coordination policy relies mainly on convergence procedures, which allow for a greater “coherence” among the different systems of higher education. Therefore, these convergence procedures aim for harmonisation, while divergent forces search for more diversity (Marginson and Wende 2007: 48). While Bologna searches for the introduction of a common framework concerning the convergence of degree structures, the signatory countries try to create a harmonised integration between the new guidelines and their traditional organisation, without forgetting the time-frames within these changes should be made. However, this does not avoid the emergence of certain tensions between harmonisation and diversity.

The topic of diversity has been widely discussed among higher education experts, and it assumes particular importance within the Bologna scope, since its “logic” aspires to create “centrally organised diversity” (Marginson and Wende 2007: 48). But this, again, is a very broad concept, which effectively created confusion and resistance in certain higher education systems, such as the binary ones, which used to award several and longer degrees. In the Netherlands, as an example, the new two-cycle system replaced the existing long first-cycle degree system. The same holds true for the Portuguese system of higher education, composed by both universities and polytechnics, which used to confer two different first cycle degrees. In the traditional system, polytechnics conferred the *bacharel* degree after three years of study, which could be followed by an additional period of up to two years leading to a degree of *licenciatura*, with the same legal value as a *licenciatura* conferred by the universities. Therefore, one can say that, even before Bologna, the Portuguese polytechnics had a 3+2 structure, only for the undergraduate cycle, and they were not allowed to confer postgraduate degrees. Moreover, as Marginson and Wende (2007) explain, although the 3+2 is the basic model, there are many variations from it, being probably the UK a good example for these variations (2007: 47). If not properly managed, these changes could threaten the organisational structure of binary systems, since they strongly contribute to increase academic drift in the polytechnic subsector (Veiga and Amaral 2009). This is also supported by the overlap of the functions and curricula of the degrees, providing that both academic and professionally oriented HEIs offer bachelor and master programmes. Nevertheless, as Marginson and Wende (2007: 47) remember, it is important to notice that although changes leading to system convergence were

all observed within the framework of the Bologna process, this does not necessarily mean that they have been caused by it. As it was already mentioned here, a set of global, international, national and even institutional factors allowed for such changes. Therefore, Bologna only prompted developments that have been driven by deeper underlying forces of particular interests at national level. Indeed, Bologna provided a mental frame for restructuring some aspects, such as those related to the implementation of a new degree structure (2007: 47).

Bearing in mind the resource dependence theory and the neo-institutionalism principles, one can say that Bologna allowed both governments and HEIs an opportunity to reflect on their higher education system, and in the way institutions construct and follow their mission. Thus, within the range of possibilities and challenges they have, HEIs interact with such an international context by choosing the way they decide to implement the reforms. They do this bearing in mind both the cultural dimension of the institution and the nation, looking forward to accomplish their aims. Actually, Marginson and Wende (2007) also point out to another example where certain countries, applying their autonomy, used Bologna as leverage to increase institutional diversity in the system. Among others, Sweden and Finland are countries where governmental policies aim to enhance participation in higher education and thereby, more diversity, especially at the undergraduate level, meaning more choice and more opportunities for non-traditional students to enrol in the sector. In turn, more domestic students combined with more diversity of supply enhance the potential of each country as a knowledge economy (2007: 48). Interesting enough is to observe how the concept of diversity evolved and the importance this has to higher education's organisation and governance<sup>29</sup>. From the system level analysis (systemic, institutional or programmatic diversity, as Birnbaum, 1983, categorised it), the concept evolved to a much more comprehensive scope up to the European level. Thereby, the authors draw our attention to an extremely important aspect which will change the future environment where European HEIs operate:

“... whether and how diversification can lead to an effective division of labour at European level; whether a cooperation or rather a competition-based process would be the most appropriate way to achieve this; and how individual countries will balance such a division of labour at European level with their national priorities” (Marginson and Wende 2007: 47).

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<sup>29</sup> Despite Birnbaum (1983) developed a typology for diversity levels, the definition of diversity provided by Martin Trow (1995) is particularly useful. Thus, the author states that diversity “... is the existence of distinct forms of post-secondary education, of institutions and groups of institutions within a state or nations that have different and distinctive missions, educate and train of different lives and careers, have different styles of instruction, are organised and funded and operate under different laws and relationships to government” (Trow 1995 *in* Meek 2000: 3). Trow completes the majority of researchers' definition by briefly identifying the core areas of activity of an institution that are managed according to each type of higher education system.

Once involved in the Bologna process, and faced with this scenario, the EU has legitimacy to develop and coordinate policies that uniformly strengthen the European knowledge economy. Indeed, more recently the EU has assumed a more economic side to “regulate” higher education, by emphasising the need to develop market-oriented approaches to stimulate EHEA development and competition. Cooperation and competition forces are therefore working towards the same end but through different means. On one hand, whether EU aims to be an excellent area for higher education and research, “(...) cooperation is seen as the pathway towards stronger global competitiveness of the EU as a whole”, and the (traditional) role of the European Commission is to stimulate this cooperation (Marginson and Wende 2007: 53). Nevertheless, on the other hand, the “EU is seen as an internal market subject to internal competition strategies, which were likewise introduced to achieve stronger global competitiveness” (...) (2007: 53). This reflects the recent dynamics on higher education in Europe. As social and cultural agents, universities are seen as key actors in achieving access and excellence in higher education provision. As Marginson and Wende (2007) refer, the Bologna instruments, such as the ECTS, the International Diploma Supplement and the EQF, should be used to promote more organised diversity and flexibility in order to attain, not only social and cultural purposes, but also the economic objectives that HEIs are required to perform in the new millennium.

This new form of “doing policy” in the higher education field stems also from shifts of governance both at the system and institutional levels. Despite the fact that nation-states still retain strategic control over their higher education systems, no longer are they the only actors in governing. As an example, Wit (2007) clarifies that:

“(...) the EU programmes promoting mobility and networking are based on voluntary cooperation between institutions of higher education and on a bottom up approach, and the grants in these programmes come with strings and conditions attached. (...) convergence between national education systems would to some extent appear inevitable as regards mobility and networking” (2007: 246).

Thus, when exploring the boundaries between cooperation and competition and between divergence and convergence, one can say that there is (or it should be) a permanent search for a balance between the sovereignty and autonomy of the nation states on the one hand, and cooperation and loss of national autonomy, on the other. The balance reached is never definitive and always negotiable. Nevertheless, more and more countries are agreeing to retain a decreasing amount of their national sovereignty, and European integration has increasingly become an accepted solution to common problems and challenges (Wit 2007: 245).

## 4. The Portuguese System of Higher Education

This section aims to contextualise the reader on the national higher education system. Its major features, as well as its evolution, and also the events that point to the current scenario of change will be briefly mentioned. Indeed, any analysis to the reforms or changes introduced in the system could never be properly done without taking into account the different historical and social periods which dictated the organisational structure of the Portuguese higher education system. Thereby, especial attention should be given to the creation of the vocational sector, since its development and preservation represent an interesting hallmark of the Portuguese *exceptionalism*.

### 4.1 The national context of Higher Education – Overview of its Evolution

The education system in Portugal is regulated through the Education System Act of 1986, more specifically, by Law 46/86 of 14<sup>th</sup> October, further amended by Laws 115/97, of 19<sup>th</sup> September and 49/05, dated of 30<sup>th</sup> August (Ferreira et al. 2008: 191). There are today, however, two different ministries for the education sector. The Ministry of Education is accountable for policy at the compulsory basic education and non-compulsory secondary education<sup>30</sup>, and the MCTES is in charge of higher education and science policy in general. Since its creation up to the present date, new amendments were added to the Education System Act, which resulted in significant changes, especially those concerning to the establishment and autonomy of the vocational and private subsectors, and to the (re)definition of the system and degree structure (chapter V).

Portuguese higher education is fairly diverse in terms of systemic diversity (OECD 2006). There are three major lines of institutional differentiation: a binary distinction between universities and polytechnic institutions, a distinction between specialised schools typically with a single focus area and larger integrated multi-focused institutions, and the coexistence of both public and private sectors of higher education (OECD 2006: 21). There is also the Catholic University, which is the oldest non-public university in the country<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> In Portugal, the term secondary education corresponds to what in Europe is typically referred to as upper secondary education (CHEPS IHEM 2008: 8).

<sup>31</sup> The Portuguese Catholic University was created with a unique status under article XX of the Concordat between Portugal and the Holy See of May 1940, officially recognised in 1971. The Catholic University is free to

According to the OECD report (2006), the Portuguese higher education network is currently constituted by around 160 institutions plus 7 institutions of military and police education. The binary line is a complex one once 18 polytechnic schools are also part of universities (2006: 21). The overall institutional landscape can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2 - Categorisation of Portuguese higher education institutions, 2006**

	University		Polytechnic	
	Universities	Other schools (not integrated)	Polytechnic institutes	Other schools (not integrated)
<b>Public</b>	14	5	15	16
<b>Private</b>	13	45	2	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>76</b>

Source: OECD 2006: 21.

Public universities and public polytechnic institutes are represented by the CRUP and by the CCISP, respectively. These actors, together with the MCTES and the DGES, rectors and presidents of polytechnics, students, the national union of higher education and professional associations represent the main actors of the Portuguese higher education system.

When analysing the development of the national system of higher education, it is important to bear in mind that, in 1974 a pacific revolution occurred, with the objective to displace the old dictatorial regime. After this moment, important changes took place and, as Amaral, Rosa and Tavares (2007) explain, the country went through a period of normalisation until the mid-1980s, with the political purpose of becoming a member of the EU (2007: 313).

For the Portuguese educational field, this event represents a turning point in its history, once it contributed to the democratisation of education, by enabling the transition from an elite to a mass higher education system, as Amaral and Teixeira (2000) referred:

“Until the mid-1970s the Portuguese higher education system was clearly an elite system. It was characterised by low enrolment levels, despite some attempts to increase the overall participation rate” (2000: 246).

Thereby, after the 1974 Revolution there was a fast increase in the demand for higher education (Amaral and Magalhães 2008: 208). Nevertheless, the signs of a dictatorial regime that lasted almost 50 years were difficult to erase, and as these researchers explained “... despite the socialist climate that followed the overthrow of the authoritarian regime, the

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create faculties, institutes, departments, research centres and other organisational units but must notify MCTES of such developments (CHEPS IHEM 2008: 10).

importance of education in economic policy remained unchallenged” (2008: 208). Only in 1975, the government recognised the importance of education policy as a fundamental tool in promoting economic development (2008: 208).

The authors also draw attention to the fact that much of the expansion of the system was achieved through the support of the World Bank and the OECD. In this way, the recommendations of the Bank concerning the *boom* of enrolments felt after the 25<sup>th</sup> of April of 1974 were very clear: “In view of the rapidly increased university enrolments, which represent an uneconomical drain in the economy... [the Bank recommends a] gradual introduction of quantitative restraints” (World Bank 1977: ii in Amaral and Magalhães 2008: 208). Thus, in 1976, through the Decree-Law 701/76 of 28<sup>th</sup> September, a system of *numerus clausus* was implemented in order to control the number of vacancies offered by HEIs and thereby as a way of preventing a loss of quality in education provision<sup>32</sup>. These numbers are annually fixed by the MCTES in consultation with HEIs according to their proposals. Nevertheless, the creation of a system which limited access to higher education in a country with a very small percentage of the relevant age cohort students attending higher education should never be understood as an isolated factor. The rationale behind it needs to take into account the creation of the private and vocational subsectors, as the following section aims to explain.

## 4.2 Creation and Development of the Vocational Sector in Portugal

The university system is the oldest in Portugal and it has its origins in the 13th century (CHEPS IHEM<sup>33</sup> 2008: 10). Before the establishment of the vocational sector, Portugal had only university education, namely, four public universities, which much explained the low number of students’ enrolments.

The vocational sector was formally established in 1973, through a Reform Act passed by the National Assembly on the 25<sup>th</sup> July. With the purpose to expand and develop the university sector and transform the “medium level” schools<sup>34</sup> in the non-university sector this new binary system was, on one hand, inspired by “human capital” theory, and on the other

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<sup>32</sup> In 1976 the *numerus clausus* system was firstly introduced for the courses of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. One year later, in 1977, the Decree-Law 397/77, of 17<sup>th</sup> September extended the *numerus clausus* system to all higher education study programmes (Amaral and Magalhães 2005).

<sup>33</sup> IHEM is the acronym of International Higher Education Monitor. The CHEPS IHEM is an ongoing research project, commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (CHEPS IHEM 2008: 6).

<sup>34</sup> These “medium-level” schools were called “industrial and commercial institutes” and had been established in Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra.

hand, legitimated by OECD reports and recommendations (Amaral et al. 2007: 314). Nevertheless, due to the 1974 revolution, the process of expansion and development of the sector was disrupted. After the revolution, the newly elected socialist party believed the system should further diversify, "... either by creating new schools and new courses or by differentiating some already established courses such as Medicine, Dental Medicine and Nutrition" (Amaral et al. 2007: 315). However, it was only in 1977 that the Decree-Law 427-B/77 instituted polytechnic higher education as "... short-term higher education, aimed at training technicians and professionals of education at an intermediate level of higher education" (*ibid*). This explicit policy intention, as Magalhães (2004) clarifies, was based on the "... diversification of higher education, but also to meet urgent needs in several socio-economic sectors through the training of qualified technicians" (Magalhães 2004: 303). In the meanwhile, this short-term higher education was later renamed as polytechnic higher education (through the Decree-Law 513-T/79), being successively promoted by the ministers of education and the World Bank (Ferreira et al. 2008: 193). Moreover, the link between the economic and regional development was reinforced through the agreement on specific objectives concerning the institutional mission of public polytechnics, which was meant to be different from the "more conceptual and theoretical characteristics" of universities (Magalhães 2004: 303).

Another attractive political objective, which helped the development of the vocational sector, was the possibility of Portugal becoming an EU member. Therefore, the priorities (and attentions) were then turned to other European countries, in order to strategically act in three major fields: quantity, quality and access (Amaral et al. 2007). With respect to quantity measures, it was believed that it would be necessary to expand and diversify the system, both by implementing a binary system and by allowing the emergence of the private subsystem. This required a continuous work in developing the public sector by granting increased institutional autonomy to it. Simultaneously, it was necessary to regulate the size of the higher education system, by means of access policies (Amaral et al. 2007: 315). The authors also refer that: "... without reducing the supply of university graduates, particularly in engineering, graduates from the polytechnics might find employment opportunities scarce; the Bank saw this as a threat to the new short vocational education programmes" (Amaral and Magalhães 2008: 208). Thus, during this period, the Portuguese government, driven by the World Bank recommendations and wishing to enter into the EU, defined its priorities as the normalisation



of the country's economy where polytechnic higher education would perform a central role in the national higher education system. Thereby,

“Access policies were combined with large investments in new buildings and equipment and an academic career progression more attractive (less demanding) than a university one to promote the development of the polytechnic sector. The regional character of the polytechnics was stressed by allowing the institutions to reserve a percentage of vacancies for students living in the region”<sup>35</sup> (Amaral and Magalhães 2005: 124).

The 1980s and 1990s were in fact the “golden years” for this type of institution. As the researchers confirm, the development of the polytechnic sector was impressive (see table 3). “From 1983-84 to 2001-02, the share of enrolments changed from 76,2% in public universities [and] 12,6% in public polytechnics (...) to 43,6% [and] 27,9% (...) respectively” (2005: 124).

Nevertheless, more than thirty years after its creation, and despite this quantitative success<sup>36</sup>, the operationalisation of the binary system still remains a central political issue. As Magalhães (2004) explains, in 1977, Marçal Grilo (who served as Minister of Education in the XIII Constitutional Government, from 1995-1999) introduced an important amendment to the Education System Act (Law 46/86), by signing the Law 115/97, which allowed for polytechnics to confer the degree of *licenciado*, which was until then only conferred by universities. This is usually pointed as the first sign of academic drift in the vocational subsystem, despite the ambiguity of both subsystems could be noticed quite before. As Magalhães (2004) argues, this ambiguity was also perceived in the research field, once polytechnics were not excluded from doing this type of activity. Indeed, polytechnics were expected to explore non-traditional areas in this field, such as applied research, areas of experimental technologies and education, and link these with regional and local needs (Magalhães 2004: 303-304). It was in fact believed that these new institutions would better serve the economic and social needs of the population, especially at a time when the established universities had almost no vocational orientation to assume training programmes designed for specialised labour market niches (Ferreira et al. 2008: 193). Furthermore, the existence of a binary system would not only allow for more diversity in terms of student choice, but also, it would place the vocational sector in a position capable of receiving, if not

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<sup>35</sup> This is called *preferência regional* (regional preference) – Article 28º - c (national competition regulation to access to polytechnic higher education) of the Decree-Law 296-A/98 of 25<sup>th</sup> September.

<sup>36</sup> Presently, polytechnics enrol one third of all students of the Portuguese higher education system and there is a polytechnic institution in every region of the country. Whenever the term *region* is used regarding the Portuguese territory, it refers to districts (*distritos*). These, as it is mentioned in Ferreira et al. (2008: 200), are geographical regions aggregating municipalities (*concelhos*). Portugal comprises 18 districts.

the majority, at least a large population of higher education students. This objective has so far not yet been achieved (Magalhães 2004: 305). As the author refers, despite the existence of distinct types of HEIs in Portugal, universities continue to offer a higher number of vacancies, and therefore a higher number of enrolments in this subsystem, as can be seen in table 3. This situation should be understood bearing in mind the positional character of the different types of higher education (Hirsh 1976 *in* Magalhães 2004: 306). As aforementioned, university education is in fact connected to an elitism character, strengthened by the type of students attending both sectors. This vision is confirmed by Seixas (1991), who argues that “... polytechnic higher education is characterised by a larger number of students coming from the working classes in comparison to students coming from the upper classes” (1991: 110). Following this argument Amaral and Magalhães (2005) argue that the cultural background of the family is related with the academic access of the different sectors of higher education. However this does not necessarily mean that they promote social equity, as the authors refer:

“... in general, students from families of administrators, managers and qualified technicians (those with higher cultural capital), enrol preferably in public universities while students from families of employers (on averaged they do not possess a very high cultural capital, but they can possess a significant economic capital) prefer private universities (the cultural background of the family is a handicap for their academic success). Students from families of the lower classes show more preference for local polytechnics (the economic factor has more influence)” (2005: 131).

This distinction is also perceived by students who see vocational education as less prestigious than university education, which explains why this subsystem has low attraction capacity for students (2005: 131).

The consolidation of the national higher education system is not only result of developments observed in the public sector. During the 1980s, the paradoxical situation between the access restrictions imposed by the *numeri clausi* and the investments in the non-university subsystem, resulting in a huge increase in the number of candidates to higher education, created the perfect scenario for the emergence of private non-profit HEIs. Indeed, they “... absorbed the excess in demand that could not be met by public institutions” (Amaral and Magalhães 2008: 209). As the authors refer, during the mid 1990s, the increasing mismatch between demand and supply of higher education obliged many students to choose any available programme or institution, without paying attention to quality issues or future employment prospects. Indeed, especially in the years of severe economic stringency following the revolution, the government allowed the development of the private higher education

network, “... without close scrutiny of the quality of what has being offered” (2008: 209). This situation, combined with changes in the democratisation of secondary education, as well as lower requirements for students finishing secondary education and entering higher education created an enormous growth in the sector (Amaral and Teixeira 2000: 252), as can be seen in table 3.

**Table 3 - Evolution of enrolments by higher education subsystem**

	1971/1972		1981/1982		1991/1992		2001/2002		2004/2005	
	n. students	%	n. students	%	n. students	%	n. students	%	n. students	%
Public Univ.	43,191	87.3	64,659	76.8	103,999	55.7	171,014	43.6	167,218	44.7
Public Polyt.	2,981	6.0	12,195	14.5	31,351	16.8	109,624	27.9	108,318	29.0
Private	3,289	6.7	7,319	8.7	51,430	27.5	111,653	28.5	98,355	26.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,461</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>84,173</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>186,780</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>392,291</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>373,891</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Ferreira et al. 2008: 194.

According to the OECD (2006), from 1990 to 2000, enrolments in public polytechnics had increased 224.7% and 121.7% in the private sector. In the academic year of 1991-92 the number of vacancies at private institutions exceeded those at public institutions (Amaral and Magalhães 2005: 122). However, the development of the private higher education sector in Portugal needs to be framed in the new political and social context of the system. As mentioned before (section 2.3), changes in strategies of regulation and state control, as well as system expansion, contributed for the emergence of new governance modes. During the consolidation of the binary framework, as Santiago and Carvalho (2004) explain, a shift from a centralised system, based on state control over HEIs, to a less centralised one was initiated (2004: 431). Furthermore, at a time of competing for economic relevance and for international visibility, it is no surprise the proliferation of the private sector, though this evolved in directions contrary to the aims of the geographical and supply diversification policies (Amaral and Teixeira 2000: 264). In addition, “... the rhetoric about the flexibility of the students’ skills and profiles in the adaptation processes to the labour market became increasingly common in the discourses of social and academic actors (Santiago and Carvalho 2004: 432).

### 4.3 Further Developments and Current Situation

When analysing the establishment and development of polytechnic institutions in Portugal, one can observe a double-edged sword situation. On the one hand, the creation of this subsystem materialised the wishes of offering higher education in the form of the

*bacharelato* degree, which corresponded to shorter, technical professional higher education degrees, in areas usually excluded from university education. But, on the other hand, since its creation, the polytechnic education was “labelled” as higher education of second quality, despite all the governmental efforts to promote its development. Since the establishment of the polytechnic subsystem, these efforts relate more to its regional character, once they were allowed to establish mechanisms of regional preference. Furthermore, as Amaral et al. (2007) refer, the Comprehensive Law of the Educational System helped to consolidate the new polytechnic network by reasserting the polytechnics’ mission to train human resources for professional activities through the transmission of scientific knowledge, both theoretical and applied (2007: 324). Additionally, in the academic year 2003-04, the Minister of Science and Higher Education<sup>37</sup> “... decided to close down some 35 study programmes because of low student enrolment and reduce about 3200 vacancies in the public sector in areas of low student demand, in an attempt to increase the percentage of students in priority areas such as health and technologies and to force some students to move inland thus protecting universities and polytechnics located away from the more populated areas” (Magalhães and Amaral 2005: 123). Nevertheless, despite the large number of enrolments in the vocational sector, this has not been able to emerge as an attractive option for many students. Furthermore, the difficulty in following a clear institutional mission has been also visible in this sector. As the authors refer, instead of following a distinctive profile in order to gain a strong position in the market of intermediate level human resources training adapted to regional needs (as the World Bank recommended), the majority of polytechnics decided to copy the model of the new universities. These, in turn, aiming to be more competitive, started to occupy specific fields typically from the polytechnic sector and addressing closer connections with local communities (Magalhães and Amaral 2005: 125). This situation became especially evident after the academic year 2000/2001, when the number of students started to decrease, and both subsystems realised the need to compete for more resources (being those financial, human and/or intangible, as quality and prestige). Thereby, both in terms of quality and social standing, polytechnics are in a disadvantageous position (2005: 125).

Other factors have adversely influenced the performance of the non-university sector. As aforementioned, polytechnics’ mission was to promote the regional development and relations with economic and social activities, which is still valid at the present moment.

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<sup>37</sup> In the XV Constitutional Government (2002-2004), the Ministry for Higher Education was renamed as Minister of Science and Higher Education and Pedro Lynce was appointed Minister.

Nevertheless, as Ferreira et al. (2008) explain “... the political definition of region was not the same in the 1970s” (2008: 200). When comparing the development of polytechnics’ network with the private sector, regional differences emerge. In order to fulfil the government’s policy goals of the higher system’s expansion and diversification, public polytechnics were established in all districts of the country. On the contrary, the private sector is mainly concentrated in the regions of Lisbon and North of Portugal, and invested in less expensive programmes, which required fewer infrastructures (2008: 200). In turn, the public sector offers a larger number of disciplinary areas with significant enrolments. Nonetheless, although polytechnic education was always planned to be closely related to social, economic and regional development, at the present time, there are institutions that are run more like national institutions than regional ones. This happens because, as the authors explain, access to higher education is organised from a national perspective instead of a regional one. Thus, in periods of declining enrolments one can observe “... examples of course duplication in universities and polytechnics” (2008: 200). This explains the authors’ views, who argue that, in practice, the development of both these subsystems (vocational and private sectors) did not apply the *region* concept’s evolution.

In this way, it is possible to observe a gap between policy intentions and policy outcomes. The creation of the vocational subsystem (together with the proliferation of private HEIs<sup>38</sup>) aimed to expand and diversify (both geographic and programmatically) the national higher education system, as well as, to increase the number of student enrolments in fields of economic importance. Nevertheless, this has so far not yet been achieved. Amaral and Teixeira (2000) explain this scenario with the following argument:

“Some of the problems raised by this recent evolution are due to a paradoxical situation in Portugal in which the government has the power and the instruments to regulate the system, but frequently abstains from using them. (...) It is also true that there are many laws of strong regulatory character, but they are not always taken very seriously. For the same reason the State has clear difficulties in enforcing any credible system of ‘a posteriori’ control, and in general prefers to resort to ‘a priori’ close scrutiny of proposals submitted to the approval of the Ministry of Education” (2000: 262-263).

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<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that, in Portugal, the establishment of the private education sector was very well welcomed since its very beginning. This was considered a crucial step towards a more democratic higher education system. Although several ministers played an important role in its development, Roberto Carneiro (Minister of Education from 1987 to 1991) was its greater promoter. He created favourable conditions for expansion of the private sector “... by eliminating minimum pass marks on entrance examinations to higher education, almost doubling demand from one day to the next. Students could enter higher education even with zero marks and the public sector could not cope with this sudden huge demand increase, opening the way for the expansion of the private sector” (Amaral et al. 2007: 321-322).

Thus, despite some success, the overall mission of the polytechnics network was not achieved. They were not able to define a distinctive profile allowing them to overcome the handicap of lower social standing relative to universities, which resulted in considerable academic drift and therefore questioning whether or not polytechnics really contributed to system's diversity (Amaral and Magalhães 2005: 129).

The actual panorama for Portuguese HEIs is quite challenging. The labour market is saturated in almost every field of education and the absence of appropriate state regulation allows for an unhealthy “market-like” competition where only the “strongest species” will survive. As Amaral and Teixeira (2000) defend, as private institutions are more expensive, their recruitment is very local and their social prestige is not very high, they have everything to lose when competing with other sectors (2000: 262). In the same challenging scenario one will also find “... public polytechnics, especially those located in towns where there are also well-established universities competing directly for the available students (...), as well as, some of the younger public universities located in less populated inland regions” (Amaral and Magalhães 2008: 217). As both authors refer, in Portugal, both in terms of quality and social standing, polytechnics are in a disadvantageous position. Apparently, this is the price to pay to maintain diversification through a binary system, once this is “... tainted by a political suspicion: the elitism implicit within the university subsystem” (Amaral and Magalhães 2005: 126).

Further developments and changes in the international and national landscape allowed for a restructuring of the national system of higher education. The latest OECD reports emphasise the reforms in the binary system and draw attention to the renewed role of polytechnics. The next chapter aims to depict this statement in the awake of the new legislation which implemented the Bologna process.

## **5. Data Presentation and Analysis**

This chapter aims to contextualise the reader on the latest developments of the national higher education system, especially in what the preservation of the binary system after the implementation of the Bologna process is concerned. Additionally, in the second section, the main findings which aim to answer to the questions proposed here are presented, as well as the perceptions of the interviewees on the topic of analysis. The chapter concludes with a summary of the aspects which deserved major emphasis throughout the study.

### **5.1 Implementing the Bologna Process in Portugal: Internationalisation “at home”**

Starting officially in the academic year of 2006-07, the implementation of the Bologna process in Portugal was, since its beginning, a long and controversial process.

Since 1998 there have been six different Ministers in charge of higher education in Portugal, conditioning the stability of the system. To adjust the legal framework to the Bologna declaration it was necessary to change the Education System Act (Veiga, Rosa and Amaral 2005: 95), passed by Parliament, which defined the type and length of degrees each HEI could award. This only happened in 2005 when a new government came into office (XVII Constitutional Government) with a clear parliamentary majority and was able to amend the law. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that prior to this date, in May 2004, the Parliament passed an Education Act defining the new-Bologna type degree structure, but this Act was not consensual and all the opposition political parties voted against it (Veiga et al. 2005: 95) and the President of the Republic decided not to promulgate the law. Law 49/2005 passed by Parliament on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August introduced important changes in the Education System Act, allowing for changes in the legal framework leading to the implementation of the Bologna process. The law addressed other major aspects, which can be perceived as an increase in institutional autonomy. As examples, one can read that it decentralised decisions concerning the access conditions for students over 23 years old that did not complete a traditional secondary education diploma, by giving institutions full responsibility for the selection procedures and by creating conditions for recognising professional experience. It also adopted the Bologna organisation model composed of three cycles of studies and it

emphasised one of its central issues, namely, the transition from a traditional teaching paradigm to a student-learning paradigm<sup>39</sup>.

During the period before the passing of Law 49/2005 there were several discussions concerning the interpretation and the implementation of the Bologna objectives by the different actors involved. On the one hand, the government passed legislation to introduce the ECTS system and the compulsory use of the Diploma Supplement, and appointed specialised task forces to work on the implementation of the law (Veiga et al. 2005: 95). On the other hand, Portuguese HEIs, aware of international trends, became quite desperate with the delays of governmental regulation and “... decided to follow those trends with mixed success” (2005: 95), depending on the level of institutional autonomy. Simultaneously, and also due to the uncertainty climate, one could observe from the polytechnic subsector, attempts to redefine their academic functions, thus becoming more similar to universities. Indeed, as Amaral (2003) concluded from the results of a national public inquiry run for the MCTES, and after a number of seminars and meetings with the heads of HEIs and professors, it was even proposed that the distinguishing factors between the two subsystems should not exist. This distinction should rather be based on each institution’s strategy and on its scientific and technological capacity. Thus, the dominant discourses proclaimed that both subsectors should be transformed into a single system. Within this unitary system, the distinguishing characteristics of HEIs would be their ability to provide training more focused on the transmission and creation of knowledge (regardless of its practical or theoretical character) or on their more vocational orientation. Nevertheless, when confronted with the hypothesis of breaking the current organisation of the system, this restructuration was seen as a mistake comparable to what happened in the 1970s, when the industrial and commercial schools were abolished<sup>40</sup> (Gonçalves, Rendas, de Oliveira, Pais, Sousa and de Oliveira 2003). Other suggestions on the length of studies and the type of degrees that HEIs could award were made, leading to the conclusion that it was difficult to reach consensus among all types of institutions with respect to the implementation of the Bologna system.

Veiga and Amaral (2009) explain that, at a time when considerable academic drift was perceived in the polytechnic subsystem, it was necessary to carefully analyse the compatibility

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<sup>39</sup> My translation on the three first points introduced in the Decree-Law 74/2006 of 24<sup>th</sup> March referring to the Law 49/2005, of 30<sup>th</sup> August (DL 74/06, 24/03, pp. 2242).

<sup>40</sup> My translation on the III Seminar, Appendix 3, held on the 27<sup>th</sup> May 2003 (University of Porto), entitled “Educação académica e capacitação profissional (cursos profissionalizantes)” - *Academic education and vocational training (vocational programmes)*.



of the binary system with the two-tier degree framework, because the binary structure was endangered (2009: 57). Nevertheless, as the authors refer, "... when the legislation was finally passed it became clear that the government had aimed to preserve, or even reinforce, the binary system. At the same time, HEIs immediately made an attempt at the fast implementation of the new system, considering that Bologna-followers would have an advantage over Bologna-laggards in the competition for students" (2009: 58). This fact, impelled the researchers to admit the hypothesis that the implementation process "... corresponds to implementation 'in form' rather than 'in substance', thus softening tensions between the European and the national and local levels" (2009: 57).

The implementation of the Bologna process in Portugal gained a new breath in March 2006, after the government passed the Decree-Law 74/2006 (dated of 24<sup>th</sup> March), creating the necessary legal framework to adapt the old study programmes according to the Bologna degree structure.

Answering to the research problem proposed here, *how is the Portuguese government dealing with the changes created by the Bologna process in the structure of the national system of higher education?*, it is assumed that, differently from what happened in other countries, the legislation defining the implementation of the Bologna process in Portugal was used by the government as a *coercive* tool to separate the two subsystems, rather than contributing to the blurring of their boundaries. Indeed, the separation of both subsystems was achieved throughout several measures, which provide clarification on the research question: *how can the Bologna legislation contribute to clarify the binary division of the Portuguese higher education system?* One should highlight the following initiatives towards this end:

a) Differences, between polytechnics and universities concerning the length of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of studies. Thus, in the wake of the Decree-Law 74/2006, polytechnic education is considered as clearly vocational and the normal length of the first cycle is three years. Only in exceptional cases can polytechnics offer a degree of four years length. Universities can freely choose between 3 or 4 years for the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle. It might happen that for some professions (not many), international requirements demand a longer training period, which can vary from four, five or six curricular years of study (e.g. 4 years for chemistry, 5 years for engineering and/or architecture and 6 years for medicine);

b) Differences in the nature of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of studies, which will be forcibly vocational in the polytechnic subsector and scientific in the university subsystem. The 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of studies can be obtained through two different paths: a thesis or a professional internship. In

principle, to lecture the first type, institutions need to have PhD holders and enough recognised research capacity, which is mainly a characteristic of universities. In the second case, it is necessary that institutions perform vocational work with professional “specialists” to supervise this internship. This applies more to vocational institutions. Nevertheless, as Veiga and Amaral (2009) point out, the polytechnic subsystem has been facing serious difficulties in the approval of their 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle proposals. Moreover, this “new specialist” position it is not yet clearly defined, though it is assumed that a “specialist” is an expert with relevant professional experience, but not necessarily holding a PhD. This issue has been raising several questions, due to the multiple interpretations it suggests. More recently, the Decree-Law 107/2008 of 25<sup>th</sup> June advances this definition by referring to a “specialist” as “... someone with recognised experience and professional competence...” (DL 107/08, 25/06, article 71<sup>o</sup>-3);

c) Exclusivity for the university subsystem to confer integrated and scientific masters and doctoral studies. Polytechnics cannot confer these types of masters, nor PhDs;

d) Differences concerning the nature of the academic staff in both subsystems, which should be mainly composed of PhD holders at universities and professional experts (specialists) at polytechnics<sup>41</sup>.

Additionally to these measures, it is important to mention that, when adapting the old *licenciaturas* to the Bologna bachelors, HEIs were hindered to increase their supply, meaning this that each of the previous programme of study could only lead to a single 1<sup>st</sup> cycle (OECD 2006). This, in turn, highly restricted institutions’ scope of action. Thus, using the Decree-Law 74/2006 as a means to differentiate and strengthen the institutional mission of each subsector, protecting the system’s binary character, the government created a hierarchy based on the length of studies and introduced different qualification requirements for the academic staff of both subsystems, as well as the type of degrees these could award.

With respect to the organisational structure of the Portuguese higher education system, one can say that the MCTES’ ideas and vision were reinforced by the OECD recommendations. In June 2005 the Portuguese Minister, José Mariano Gago, approached the OECD to conduct a review of the Portuguese higher education system under the OECD Education Committee’s programme of national reviews (CHEPS IHEM 2008: 7). As one can read in its report, the OECD message was very clear and straightforward<sup>42</sup>:

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<sup>41</sup> My general translation of the DL 74/06, 24/03, Articles 4.º; 8.º; 9.º; 15.º, 2a and c; 18.º, 3 and 4 and 19.º; 29.º and 57.º

<sup>42</sup> See Appendix 4, page 122.

“The Review Team recommends that **the binary framework should be maintained and strengthened**. The mechanisms for resource allocation, levels of institutional autonomy, programme accreditation procedures and human resource management policies all need to be reformed to create a policy environment in which **professionally orientated polytechnic institutions can create a sustainable future that is distinct from universities**. It is recommended that the government should introduce comprehensive university and polytechnic legislation in which the autonomy of institutions is clearly defined and **the different roles of universities and polytechnics are specified**” (my emphasis) (OECD 2006: 99).

The binary nature of the Portuguese higher education system would be further consolidated with the implementation of Law 62/2007 of 10<sup>th</sup> September, which establishes a new legal framework for HEIs.

Throughout this research, one could identify different views on the topic of study. These vary according to the role and perceptions of the different actors involved on the process. Nevertheless, it might be that the interpretation of the Portuguese binary system has different meanings for the interviewees and they attribute different degrees of importance to the “impact” of the Bologna legislation on this. Furthermore, when referring to the Bologna process, different degrees of emphasis are put on other aspects of the reform. The focus on the following analysis remains the identification of policies aimed to clarify and reinforce the binary division between universities and polytechnics and consequently, adapting institutions’ behaviour to the government actions. This analysis is based on the recent legislation passed, on information available on MCTES and DGES websites, statistical information provided by GPEARI<sup>43</sup> and other relevant sources such as the stocktaking reports elaborated by the BFUG. The findings will be complemented with the empirical materials gathered during the interview process.

## **5.2 Rethinking the Portuguese Higher Education System: from Policy Formulation to Policy Implementation**

When the new Decree-Law 74/2006 was passed, the government opened a call for HEIs to submit their proposals adapting former degrees to the new degree structure. However, this was done within a short period of two weeks time for HEIs, and therefore this is pointed as one of the most inaccurate aspects of the way the implementation process was conducted.

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<sup>43</sup> GPEARI stands for Gabinete de Planeamento, Estratégia, Avaliação e Relações Internacionais (Office for Planning, Strategy, Evaluation and International Relations – an office which belongs to the MCTES).

It was previously mentioned that since the moment Portugal signed the Bologna declaration, several discussions concerning its interpretation and implementation were carried out by different actors and at different stages. In the absence of orders or guidance from a superior level, and aware of the developments performed by their European counterparts which had already implemented the agreement, Portuguese HEIs thought and proposed several ways to reorganise the system. From these meetings, in which elements of the MCTES participated in some of them, emerged interesting proposals for the reorganisation of the system, namely in what the length of the cycles of studies and the functioning of the binary system is concerned (Amaral 2003). Nevertheless, when the legislation was passed, the Ministry only approved the proposals which were in line with the patterns that it believed to be more appropriated. At the institutional level, as one can read on the OECD report (2006) and as it was perceived throughout the interviews, this meant frustration, once institutions felt their efforts during the preparation time were not valued. The head of CRUP highly criticised this situation, referring that:

“When the Portuguese government established the requirements for using international references in order to adapt the length of the programmes (...), it naturally assumed that those references existed and that they would be unique. What happened was that each institution searched for those references and in some cases, for the same discipline, some institutions found different references, meaning this, that in practice, many people spent thousands of hours working unnecessarily, looking for references that, if any, should have been founded at once for the whole system. And after all this, when the institutions presented their proposals, the Ministry only approved those, which it understood they were in accordance with its patterns and suitable for the system, according to its own judgement. So, if the purpose was to decide that, then this should have been agreed in advance, before launching the institutions in this stressful and unnecessary process, which has been totally inconclusive and a completely waste of time. This relates to the justification for the length of 3 or 4 years for several programmes. Several universities presented different versions for the same programme and then, due to higher determinations, one had to reorganise everything again according to a particular model, that, if it existed, it should have been communicated just from the beginning of this process” (Santos 2009).

With respect to the way the implementation process was abruptly conducted, the other respondents also relate it with the delay that the previous governments created since the beginning of the overall process. It is argued that, when in 2005 the current government took office with an absolute majority (and therefore was able to change the Education System Act), there was much to do in order to accomplish the Bologna declaration and therefore, the government really needed to move forward with it. Thus, the head of CCISP explains that:

“When Professor Mariano Gago took office and as the process was delayed, he was naturally pressed to pass the legislation. HEIs had to implement it. And in fact, what

happened was that institutions tried to gain notoriety by being the first ones to promote the process. Therefore, in my opinion, it is not correct to criticise the institutions, saying that the implementation process went wrong (...), because obviously, in a competitive environment, HEIs make all attempts which will allow to position themselves in the best possible place in that competition, and that's why I say that those who have the obligation to regulate the system should have avoided this to happen like it did" (Teixeira 2009).

Following this argument, Pedro Lourtie stated that the overall implementation of the process was done erroneously, and mainly due to the "constant changes in the ministers". Nevertheless, he believes that with the current team, the process seems to achieve "some consistency" (Lourtie 2009).

The way which the implementation of the Bologna process was carried on in Portugal, allow us to establish a distinction (or analysis) between what can effectively be referred as policy formulation and therefore as policy implementation, and the process of "negotiation" between government and HEIs. Thus, it might not be completely accurate to use the word "negotiation" to describe the interaction between the government and HEIs, once the process of implementing the Bologna legislation at the institutional level was achieved through coercive factors, and therefore as a top-down decision-making policy process. The head of CCISP also confirms this view:

"There weren't really negotiations. Before the legislation was issued there were discussions among the institutions, proposals about possible reorganisations of the system. There was even what I've called the *Pink Map* of the polytechnic's integration into universities! But when the legislation was passed, the implementation was done coercively (...). So, I don't think there have been any negotiations. There wasn't also a hostile environment or attitude from the institutions side. I would say that there was a *normal* attitude of accepting the orders established. I mean *normal* with respect to the relationship that exists between the state, HEIs and its citizens. The legislation was issued within a very short time, and then institutions tried to implement it as soon as possible (...). That's why I say the Bologna process was not as effective as it should be if this was done with more time" (Teixeira 2009).

In this sense, one can say that the role HEIs performed in the discussion of new forms for establishing the Bologna framework, and all the proposals they submitted before the legislation come into force (even if only part of them were accepted), i.e., this entire process of rethinking the organisation of the system, it certainly contributed for the formulation and subsequent developments of the whole policy process concerning the Bologna legislation. Staff in both subsystems gathered in search for coherent ways of reorganising the national higher education system. Despite the frustration feeling when this topic was approached, it was perceived in all interviews the fact that there was institutional collaboration between and

within universities and polytechnics. This kind of interaction was essential for a better understanding of the process and for a higher awareness of what was necessary to do. This is of especial relevance when one thinks of the importance HEIs had on the implementation process. Indeed, though the actors interviewed feel that only in exceptional cases their ideas were applied, they recognise that,

“In some aspects, the reform depended on the people who were in charge of the faculties and of the various programmes. The more motivated, the more proactive and the more dynamic they were, the better they understood the possible outcomes and the needs of this reform. So they moved forward with it and they were able to change significantly the teaching-learning paradigm” (Santos 2009).

In conclusion, one can say that the Bologna framework was coercively imposed by the government, and the way institutions responded to it depended on internal dynamics based on relations of power and authority.

### **5.2.1 Institutional Responses to Government Actions**

Despite HEIs had such a short period of time to reformulate their programmes, surprisingly enough, they presented 1464 proposals, 33% of them being new study programmes and 67% being adaptations of old programmes to the Bologna-type structure<sup>44</sup>. A total of 38% of the proposals came from public universities and 27% from public polytechnics (Veiga and Amaral 2009: 58). Thus, as it was analysed by Portela, Sá, Alexandre and Cardoso (2009), in 2006-07 Bologna-type programmes coexisted with old-style programmes, both in the same institution and in the same field of study. This coexistence may have contributed, as aforementioned, to an implementation in ‘form’ rather than in ‘substance’, meaning this a reduction in the number of years to finish the first cycle but keeping the old curricula and learning processes (2009). Indeed, this view is common to all the interviewees. The head of CRUP refers that the implementation of the Bologna process can be described as

“...a very superficial, very cosmetic change, where fundamental aspects suffered slight differences. As an example, the undergraduate programmes that previously were 5 years length and were transformed into integrated masters of 5 years are among those, which in many circumstances, undergone only superficial changes. One lacked deep reforms at the teaching level, in the type of relationship between teacher and student, and the change of paradigm which sought to place the student at the centre of the educational process. In my

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<sup>44</sup> Concerning to this issue, the number of proposals HEIs submitted to DGES, different figures are provided by the 2008 BFUG report: 2006 - 1562 proposals; 2007 - 2790 proposals; 2008 -1592 proposals (2008: 11). Figures also differ with respect to the number of study programmes offered for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycles according to the new degree structure. Up to the moment, it was not possible to obtain this information from the DGES website.

personal opinion, the integrated master *formula* didn't help much to clarify and to ease the implementation process, once it allowed for more facility and for superficial changes when one required deeper changes" (Santos 2009).

The same concerns are expressed by the head of CCISP, who stated that:

"In many cases, I fear that this doesn't mean much more than a reduction of 3 to 5 years, meaning this, an attempt to fit in 3 years the contents that used to be transmitted in 4 or 5 years. Ok, the aim of the Bologna process was that, but it was also, and much more important than that, to make it through a completely different approach of the teaching paradigm, it was aimed to change the educational paradigm" (Teixeira 2009).

These views were later reinforced by the head of CRUP when referred to the period after the Decree-Law 74/2006 was passed. He mentioned that,

"At least administratively almost all universities have chosen to do a *forcing* by adapting their programmes in that year or in the year after the law come into force. With some exceptions, as architecture and sports, which took some more time to converge, the adaptation process was done. But this was at the formal level; on the material level, as I said earlier, there's still a long way to go" (Santos 2009).

The transition from a traditional teaching paradigm to a student-learning paradigm, as it was also evidenced by Veiga and Amaral (2009: 59), was pointed as a crucial factor in this reform, and which it has not yet been accomplished. The Decree-Law 107/2008 of 25<sup>th</sup> July reassumes the need to achieve the transition from an education system based on the transmission of knowledge, to a system based on the development of competences, in which the component of experimental work or project, among others, and the acquisition of transversal skills should play a decisive role (DL 107/2008, 25/06). Nevertheless, these answers show that the representatives of both types of HEIs feel that there is much to be done. This goes much in line with what one can read in the survey carried out by Veiga and Amaral (2009), which explains that the process of adaptation was based on relevant intended changes of the curricula of the study programmes, namely adjustments of teaching methodologies, organisation of formal contact hours and adaptations of student evaluation. However, the authors concluded that the size of classes was not reduced and therefore, "... how could the paradigm change while large student/staff ratios were maintained?" (2008: 59). In spite of being one of the most emphasised aspects of this reform (the transition from a traditional teaching paradigm to a student-learning paradigm), this analysis aims at exploring policies which help in understanding the operationalisation of the binary system after the implementation of the Bologna framework. Thus, going back in the quantitative analysis regarding to the number of proposals for changing the programmes submitted by HEIs to the DGES, it is interesting to observe how these numbers change according to the type of HEIs

(university or polytechnic) and depending on the cycle of study. In this way, in 2006, “While public universities proposed the adaptation of 175 1<sup>st</sup> cycles and 85 2<sup>nd</sup> cycles, public polytechnics proposed the adaptation of 156 1<sup>st</sup> cycles but not a single 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle” (Veiga and Amaral 2009: 63). There are several explanations for this situation. Among them, stands the fact that, as Portuguese polytechnics already had a 3+1 or 3+2 degree structure (according to the fields of study, but not leading to a master degree) the transition to the Bologna framework was easier for this subsystem, concerning the approval of 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programmes. Nevertheless, as these authors stress, this does not necessarily mean that universities were more responsive to changes than polytechnics. Though both the head of CRUP and Lourtie have a different opinion from the head of CCISP, the latter believes that the university subsystem faced more difficulties with the restructuring of the system, due mainly to two aspects:

“(…) polytechnics already had a similar system: the 3+2. So, they already had to prepare the curricula for the degree of *bachelarel* and therefore they already had to think about something that would make sense in three years time. On the other hand, providing the youth spirit and openness of the polytechnic subsystem, it would be easier for polytechnics than for universities to implement the necessary changes” (Teixeira 2009).

Opposite opinions were described by other interviewees and also by other researchers on the field. Lourtie referred that:

“(…) certainly, polytechnics had more difficulties in implementing the new legislation because this is more restrictive to them, even when it is not reasonable or justifiable” (Lourtie 2009).

Veiga and Amaral (2009) also believe that the legislation will be more difficult to realise in polytechnics than in universities.

Other aspect that created difficulties for both subsystems in the approval of their proposals, as it was aforementioned, was that when adapting the pre-Bologna programmes to the new framework, institutions could not diversify much, since each old programme could only be converted into a new 1<sup>st</sup> cycle. In 2008, despite the number of proposals have increased in both subsystems, one can still notice the difference between universities and polytechnics according to each cycle of studies. Thus, according to the figures provided by the DGES, two years after the introduction of the two-tier degree structure, in 2008, while public universities offer 590 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programmes (some of them include the integrated master) and 996 master programmes, public polytechnics supply is considerably lower for the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle, with 614 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programmes and only 106 master programmes (DGES website). The evolution of the proposals approval submitted by HEIs can be seen in table 4. According to



all interviewees, the development of the Bologna legislation, namely since the Decree-Law 74/2006 to the new legal framework of HEIs, the RJIES<sup>45</sup>, explains this “numerical advantage” of the university subsystem, at least in the first moment of the process:

“Before RJIES, the requirements for the polytechnic subsystem to award master’s degrees were more restrictive. Now, polytechnics must have more professors who hold a PhD or have the title of specialist and they need to have a high-level of research capacity associated to them. Before the new legal framework for HEIs, polytechnics didn’t require such a percentage of doctoral staff, only around 15% of the academic staff held a PhD. This, in my opinion, was the main reason. Furthermore, some masters that could only be taught in universities can now be taught in polytechnics. So, there was a period when there was a need to first assimilate the information before one can put it into practice. The system itself is now responding to this law” (Teixeira 2009).

**Table 4 – Evolution in the approval of proposals submitted by HEIs to the MCTES**

	2006 <sup>(1)</sup>		2008 <sup>(2)</sup>	
	1 <sup>st</sup> cycle	2nd cycle	1 <sup>st</sup> cycle	2nd cycle
Universities	175	85	590	996
Polytechnics	156	0	614	106
Total	331	85	1204	1102

Source: (1) – Veiga and Amaral 2009: 63.

(2) – DGES website.

The same explanation is provided by the head of CRUP, though with different feelings concerning this aspect. When asked about the reasons which explain the difference in the approval process, he pointed the introduction of RJIES as the responsible factor for polytechnics increasing supply of 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle programmes, and therefore, he considers it as a factor which might increase the similarity of programmes’ supply between both subsystems.

“This law allowed for polytechnics to award the master degree. Before the RJIES, polytechnics had no such option and it is easy to understand that they didn’t have enough manoeuvre to develop master programmes, and from now on, they have it. Universities just did what we’ve been doing for a long time: to adapt the programmes that already existed, change some of them into new masters, and in fact, other programmes were created. What I see with this law and which I highly regret is that, in practice, this is another step to bring closer the type of training provided by polytechnics to the type of training ministered in universities” (Santos 2009).

What can also be seen from this process and from the latest developments in the Portuguese higher education system is that, despite the difficulties polytechnics faced in the creation and approval of 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle proposals, the demand for vocational higher education was

<sup>45</sup> The Law 62/2007 of 10<sup>th</sup> September was passed by Parliament and established the new legal framework for HEIs in terms of governance and management. RJIES stands for – (Novo) Regime Jurídico das Instituições de Ensino Superior

not “negatively” influenced. As Portela et al. (2009) explain “... the proportion of university programs evolved from 52% in 2003/2004 to 49% in 2006/2007, which means that polytechnic studies are gaining relative importance in terms of the total number of programs” (2009). On table 5 one can see this evolution.

**Table 5 - Students enrolled in higher education, in the 1<sup>st</sup> year for the 1<sup>st</sup> time (all levels of training): university education and polytechnic education**

	2007– 2008	Weight of each subsystem	Changes relative to 2006–2007	Changes relative to 2004–2005	Changes relative to 1995–1996
Univ. HE	72989	64%	+19%	+37%	+36%
Poly. HE	41125	36%	+20%	+33%	+49%
Total	114114		+20%	+35%	+41

Source: Adapted from GPEARI/MCTES 2008: 10.

The head of CCISP also shares this opinion and refers that the “... last surveys on this [the demand for vocational education] show a growing demand for vocational programmes, since there has been an increase in employment for those who hold a more technical/professional diploma” (Teixeira 2009)<sup>46</sup>. In fact, according to the figures provided by GPEARI, one can notice that the percentage of unemployed people with the *licenciado* degree (the older and longer bachelor) is higher in the university subsystem than in the polytechnic one. Nevertheless, this situation is explained by several aspects and it should not be seen as a linear issue. Among them, there is the fact that universities have the exclusivity to award the doctoral degree and, the number of master programmes their offer is considerable superior when compared to polytechnics. Furthermore, one needs to take into consideration differences between various disciplinary fields. And even if one compares employment rates among similar programmes, there would be influence of other variables. On the other side, employability is not the only factor determining students’ choice. One will see later that HEIs themselves have been *inducing* programmatic and institutional demand through different strategies in order to target different publics. Additionally, HEIs behaviour should also be analysed according to the degree of autonomy each type of institution holds. In general, it is assumed that, higher levels of autonomy stand for higher levels of success. In this sense, it is important to remember that while public universities enjoyed full autonomy in the creation and delivery of degree programmes (they only need to register these with the DGES), public

<sup>46</sup> Appendix 5 shows the figures which refer to the number of unemployed people registered in the national Employment Centre according to the type of subsystem and the degree they hold.

polytechnics (as well as private institutions) need the prior approval from government, through DGES, for the creation of new degree programmes.<sup>47</sup> Only very recently, with the new accreditation procedures, this situation slightly changed<sup>48</sup>. Therefore, as public universities had more autonomy, they were able to change easy and rapidly their study programmes and start following international trends according to the new Bologna paradigm. Many started to implement by their own initiative the Diploma Supplement (e.g. University of Minho) and making use of the ECTS (Veiga et al. 2005: 96) even before the necessary legislation was passed. Indeed, even before 2005, the Decree-Law 173/1980 of 29<sup>th</sup> of May had already introduced the organisation of programmes according to credit units. However, few institutions (mainly public universities) have used it, once it was introduced as an optional system, to be adopted gradually and according to the interests of each institution (DL 173/1980, 29/05, articles 1º-5º). Moreover, in the polytechnic subsystem, the organisation of programmes according to a credit system was not even planned.

During this section, one has exposed several responses from HEIs to government actions, according to the interviewees. These perceptions relate to the way they perceive the process of implementation of the Bologna legislation. In general, their ideas show how they look at the (un)success of the new legislation in the whole system of higher education, and more specifically, they express the effectiveness of the process in the group of HEIs represented by them. Thus, one will analyse now how they see the influence of the Bologna legislation in the functioning of the Portuguese binary system.

### **5.2.2 Legislation for change: the Bologna Framework and the Preservation of the Binary System**

In addition to the common objectives that the Bologna declaration entails for all the signatory countries, the Portuguese government used the Decree-Law 74/2006 as a coercive

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<sup>47</sup> While university autonomy was regulated in 1988 through the University Autonomy Act (Law 108/1988 on University Autonomy amended by Law 252/97), the legal basis for the governance of the public polytechnics was enshrined in the Polytechnic Autonomy Act, Law 54/1990 of 5<sup>th</sup> September, amended by Laws 20/92 and 71/93.

<sup>48</sup> In 2006, the ENQA review committee was asked by the Portuguese government to provide advice on the legal framework supporting accreditation and quality assurance methodologies. It was expected that the panel would advice on the appropriate structures for implementing a national accreditation and evaluation agency following current best quality assurance and accreditation practices in Europe (CHEPS IHEM: 36). It is believed that, not only assessment practices should contribute to improve institutional autonomy, but also to establish similar quality requirements for both universities and polytechnics which particularly welcomed these measures. Indeed, the previous system was heavily criticised by polytechnic and private institutions, given the preferential position of public universities and considerable delays in the approval process, since these required government approval (CHEPS IHEM 2008: 36).

tool to reinforce and clarify the binary system: “Indeed, the Decree-Law 74/2006 aimed at preserving the binary divide, which resulted in imposing rather demanding conditions on institutions offering masters, which will be far more difficult to realise in polytechnics than in universities” (Veiga and Amaral 2009: 60). This is also the perception of Lourtie (2009), who stated that “... in practice, one used the implementation of the Bologna process to enhance the binary system”. Later on, the Decree-Law 107/2008 also focused on the promotion of the binary organisation, with polytechnic education concentrating upon professionally-oriented and vocational training and with university education to be further concentrated on postgraduate education (OECD 2008: 19). Despite these governmental initiatives, it is interesting to observe that, when one refers to the Bologna legislation as a tool to promote the binary character of the Portuguese higher education system, opinions seem not to be consensual among the interviewees. In other words, when trying to establish a link between the influence of the Bologna process in the maintenance of the binary system, the interviewees seem not attribute to it significant relevance. Nevertheless, this needs to be understood bearing in mind the different time frames that the process has been undergoing. Indeed, since the implementation process is already in a much more developed stage than it was three years ago, both the CRUP and CCISP representatives do not put much weight on the influence of the Bologna process (namely on the reduction of the cycles of studies and the extinction of the *bacharel* degree) in the development of the national structure of the higher education system. However, it is important to remember that the implementation of this process carried, for a long time, public discussions about the pertinence of the binary system. Although the final purpose of the reform was not the intervention on the system’s structure, the conditions and changes which were necessary to implement carried *challenges* for the current organisation of the system. This does not necessarily mean that all the interviewees agree on the rationale for the existence and maintenance of the binary system. Furthermore, as aforementioned, all the actors put more emphasis (and dedication) on the achievement of the correct teaching-learning paradigm. As the head of CCISP explained,

“The Bologna process has certain objectives, and these are related with quality, to enhance higher education quality, or to achieve a better training in the professionalisation of students, or a more suitable acquisition of skills, or even all this, but by reducing the time to transmit all the things we are supposed to transmit, which means, to increase effectiveness. I didn’t really care, and I think neither my colleagues did it, in implementing the Bologna process in order to reaffirm the division between universities and polytechnics, because it wasn’t the main objective of the process, and therefore our goal was, within the Bologna framework and bearing in mind the reduction for 3 years, to search for the best way for students acquire those skills with a vocational approach. (...) Polytechnics and universities won’t separate or have to be separated because we want them to be separated.

They must be separated if they have different missions and pursue different objectives, and if those missions are coincident with society's needs. One cannot force the system to exist to sustain itself. I mean, in this way, we don't want to have universities and polytechnics because they, in fact, must address subjects in a different way but, we are forcing them to become distinct to justify themselves. And I think this is wrong. So, the time itself will decide whether there should be universities and polytechnics (...). At the present we think so, they should exist and this development will be determined according to the competences that polytechnics and universities give to their students" (Teixeira 2009).

Thus, according to Teixeira one should not look at the Bologna legislation as a mean to influence the operationalisation of the binary system, but rather, the development of a specific society, as well as its needs. The binary system must be thought according to the skills that both types of institutions provide, as he latter mentioned:

"(...) we must look at the system and think if there is indeed room for having different skills. But this is a consequence itself and not a premise that we should have and say 'let's implement the Bologna process in this way to stress differences between universities and polytechnics'. It can't be like this. We should think: "we will implement Bologna in this way because we believe that students should be qualified in this way", and naturally, one analyses the development of the binary system in the same way or differently, and, depending on that, we will see if the system should diversify or not" (Teixeira 2009).

When confronted with the same question (the impact of the Bologna legislation in the division of both subsystems), the head of CRUP pointed two aspects that, according to him, were not helpful in the development of the overall reform of the higher education system, and consequently, they did not contribute much for a more effective division between universities and polytechnics. He explained that:

"(...) keeping the old degree designations didn't contribute much for the smooth development of the reform, once that, obviously, the current *licenciatura* degree, which is generally 3 years doesn't have the same degree of depth, of development that the previous degrees of 4 or 5 years had" (Santos 2009).

Furthermore, applying the same names for different types of programmes implies on a second aspect referred by both the head of CCISP and the head of CRUP:

"Another aspect that Bologna didn't solve in Portugal was whether the 1st cycle of studies should be broadband or not. Broadband education, the general training, the training which will allow a student to go deeper into the subjects in the 2nd cycle of studies will allow for a relatively limited number of 1st cycle studies and therefore to restrict such a diversity of programmes' designations, which in my opinion, is overly exaggerated. The names of the programmes which are 3 years length, and in 3 years people learn very little in order to one can call them a pompous name, sometimes very precise, very detailed, which goes almost to the point of being called like the specialisation of the following specialisation. And certainly, in 3 years, a person didn't learn all that, and in fact Bologna didn't clarify on this. The 1st cycle programmes are in the majority of the cases 3 years length and they continue to have ultra specialised designations, which don't match the degree of generality of broadband information which one would require from the Bologna process. And this is

important in order to facilitate the inter-communicability of careers, to allow for a student enrol in an area/field and then in the 2nd cycle he can chose any other thing which can complete his training in a more flexible way. This needs to be done” (Santos 2009).

With respect to the length of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle programmes, the head of CCISP shares the same aforementioned ideas and regrets that, at the European level, one has followed the 3 years model. He justifies his opinion as following:

“(…) I think that 3 years… time will make that these years won’t exist. I mean, people will realise that 3 years is very little and one can’t provide information at a general level plus some more technical training, and therefore, there will be a global trend for people to have the master degree. So, in the end, we will follow the 5 years model. And if Europe has adopted the 4 years model as Spain did, for example, it would be possible; it would be perceptible that this training would be given within that period of time. And, in my opinion, in this way, many people would do a master not mainly because their career demands that, but rather because they chose to continue their studies” (Teixeira 2009).

Nevertheless, Teixeira recognises that, the fact of the basic degree is now three years length, as old *bacharelatos* were in the polytechnics, helped to consolidate the image of this subsystem:

“Indeed, in the past, the polytechnic’s degrees were kind of *lame*, and now polytechnics have common degrees of 3 years. But as the university sector had also to do this 3 years journey, the likelihood of professional drift in this subsystem is high, mainly due to this reduction. And that’s why I think that, in this sense, the Bologna legislation hasn’t helped much to separate both subsystems, but I might be wrong” (Teixeira 2009).

Thus, one can notice that, despite both actors do not agree with the reduction of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of studies to 3 years length, they both see different opportunities and threats on this according to the type of institutions they represent. Interesting enough is also to observe a kind of *incoherence* or *inconsistency* on the discourses of both actors. Although they refer that the Bologna legislation did not aim to interfere on the binary structure, the fact that the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of studies was reduced brought consequences for the way HEIs have to develop their missions. In this way, if nor properly regulated, the risk of academic drift on the polytechnic subsystem and of professional drift on the university side, would increase.

When analysing the perceptions of all actors involved, it is interesting to observe that, for all the work conducted and because the legislation was issued by the government, it is clear on its side the way the system should develop and consequently diversify. Furthermore, this is also referred by the latest OECD report, as can be read in MCTES documentation: “The Portuguese higher education reform has been driven in a way which clearly reinforces the binary system, with polytechnic education focussing particularly on vocational training and advanced technical training and professionally oriented 1<sup>st</sup> cycles, and with universities strengthening the supply of solid scientific training and especially post-graduate programmes

and joining efforts and skills of teaching units and research” (DGES 2008: 1). Nevertheless, not describing (yet) the perceptions on the ideal binary system and not even the aspects that the three interviewees would like to have seen occurring in a different way, their ideas on the way the legislation help HEIs to pursue their aims are not generally as optimistic as the government. This might be, among other aspects, due to the fact that they lived *in loco* the whole process of implementation and they felt the difficulties and fears in a different perspective than the government did. Furthermore, HEIs were rushed to adapt all their programmes and to create new ones. As Veiga and Amaral (2009) concluded, there are different levels of involvement and perceptions according to the different actors involved in the implementation of the process and this explains why there is frequently a mismatch from what is reported at the European level to what HEIs staff feels. On the other side, as time goes by, the actors rationalise these processes in a distinct manner and produce different discourses about them.

Interesting enough is to observe that, despite both the head of CRUP and the head of CCISP mentioned that, “in practice there isn’t an effective distinction between universities and polytechnics” (Santos 2009; Teixeira 2009), some examples provided by them reveal that there is in fact a significant change in the way HEIs run their profiles. As an example, the head of CCISP mentions the need of increasing and improving the vocational training at the polytechnic subsystem, once that “... across Europe there are different forms and vocations, and honestly what I think it’s necessary in our country is to continue with the binary system, providing the fact that there is such a lack of qualifications, and I think polytechnics have to increase their training supply much more than universities” (Teixeira 2009).

With respect to this, also the MCTES refers an increase in the number of students’ enrolments in the polytechnic sector, which means an increase in the demand for this type of higher education. As can be read in the document, “... in general, the success of the reform can be measured by an increase in the number of students’ enrolments in higher education and by the reversing trend of decreasing students (as identified in the OECD report) since the academic year of 2006-07 (...). This trend was accelerated in 2007-08 with an increasing access to public higher education, particularly at the polytechnic” (DGES 2008: 2). This goes much in line with the concerns of the Portuguese government with respect to the lower supply of vocational education and with the subsequent initiatives to increase enrolments at this subsystem. In 2008, the technological programmes represented in Portugal only 22% of regular upper secondary education, which contrasts with the situation in most European

countries where vocational-type education represents, in general, more than 50% of the number of students (CHEPS IHEM 2008: 9). In order to solve this problem and also as a mean to strengthen the binary system, the present government is currently engaged in the creation and promotion of programmes which can effectively increase upper secondary vocational opportunities. In Portugal, as it was mentioned in the previous section, Law 49/2005 and Law 74/2006 are seen as the first steps to end with a system considered extraordinarily restrictive towards the access to higher education by adult students. Indeed, until recently, lifelong learning did not play a very significant role, "... which might be explained by the fact that the low literacy levels do not seem to be dramatically punished by the Portuguese economy as Portugal has one of the highest levels of labour participation for those people with lowest level of literacy" (Amaral 2006: 11).

The present government is committed to improving the qualifications of the Portuguese population and stimulating lifelong learning strategies by including secondary vocational and adult education in higher education, especially in the polytechnic subsystem. Examples of such initiatives are the "New Opportunities Programme" (table 6).

**Table 6 - Access Examinations for students older than 23 years old: university and polytechnic education**

	2006-2007			2007-2008		
	Total	Univ.	Poly.	Total	Univ.	Poly.
No. of enrolments for examinations	19327	10367	8960	26151	11993	14158
Approved	14444	7857	6587	17306	7760	9546
Entered HE	10856	6091	4765	11773	5806	5967
Weight of those who entered in the set of new students	15%	14%	17%	14%	12%	17%

Source: adapted from GPEARI/MCTES 2008: 2.

With this new programme the government expects to increase the percentage of vocational upper secondary places to 50% of the total offer by 2010. This includes starting 450 new vocational programmes in secondary schools that used to offer only general courses<sup>49</sup>. It is also aimed to increase the offer of vocational education in secondary education to enrol an additional number of 100,000 students<sup>50</sup>. By 2010, vocational education should represent 50% of the total offer of upper secondary education, the other 50% corresponding to general education leading directly to higher education (Amaral 2006: 12).

<sup>49</sup> See table 10 in Appendix 5, page 123.

<sup>50</sup> See table 11 in Appendix 5, page 123.



The Decree-Law 88/2006 of 23<sup>rd</sup> May has completely reorganised the professional qualification programmes, denominated Technological Specialisation Programmes – CET<sup>51</sup> (BFUG 2006: 33). These programmes were mainly offered in polytechnic institutes, and according the BFUG figures, in 2008 more than 170 post-secondary education programmes were provided to last year secondary education students (table 7). These initiatives also explain the figures on the increase of demand in the polytechnic subsystem, as aforementioned by the head of CCISP.

**Table 7 - Enrolments in the Technological Specialisation Programmes in HEIs: University and Polytechnic Education**

	2007-208	Weight of each subsystem	Variance according to 2006-07	Variance according to 2004-05
University HEIs	489	10%	+10%	+125%
Polytechnic HEIs	4322	90%	+139%	+5513%
Total	4811		+114%	+1536%

Source: adapted from GPEARI/MCTES 2008: 3.

By increasing the vocational training opportunities to different publics, it is also expected that such initiatives will foster the binary divide between universities and polytechnics and will create a more positive attitude towards learning in general and vocational education in particular. According to Lourtie (2001), the recognition of prior learning and prior experiential learning raises the levels of education attainment and of employability, and represents an additional contribution to make higher education internationally attractive and competitive. Nevertheless, as the author refers, the procedures for accrediting prior experiential learning, “... as a means to gain access to higher education without the formal qualifications or to obtain credits to be used towards a degree, are complex and require a rigorous approach to be credible” (Lourtie 2001: 17). More recently in Portugal, on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2008, it was published the Ministerial Order 30/2008 which regulates in detail the issuing of the Diploma Supplement, compulsory for all higher education diplomas. Also the recognition of foreign qualifications has been taken into account with the creation of the Ministerial Order 29/2008 (10<sup>th</sup> January), which regulates the registration of foreign diplomas. These actions are believed to contribute for easily recognise and accrediting prior experiential learning.

<sup>51</sup> CET stands for Cursos de Especialização Tecnológica.

The head of CCIPS points the creation and development of intermediate technical training as a crucial factor for the development of the country and he emphasises the role of the polytechnic subsystem in the process of qualification of the Portuguese population:

“There must be a huge effort to qualify Portuguese people within a decade, because if this doesn’t happen there will be a wave of disqualified emigrants doing the less prestigious and less qualified jobs in Europe. The qualification that one needs to do with the Portuguese people it isn’t to compete with others, but rather to not leave the country even worse than it already is. And at the present, the polytechnic structure it’s more dynamic and more open than the university system (...). So, now one needs to focus on adult qualifications and on people that is currently active (...). In this sense the New Opportunities Programme for people older than 23 years old and CETs are, in fact, initiatives that are targeted to polytechnics because universities aren’t as open as we are to receive this type of reform. And that’s why I say this type of qualification efforts can’t be done at the university level” (Teixeira 2009).

At this point, one can also notice a kind of ambivalent discourse, or an adjustment in the words chosen according to what this actor aims at or wishes. On the one hand, Teixeira (2009) mentions the importance of the binary system, especially of the vocational side of the polytechnic subsystem in the development of the country. On the other hand, it is perceived the wish of positioning the polytechnic as a type of institution with quality, in order to be positioned in the same level as universities and to be recognised as institutions with equal importance.

The financial aspect is other issued pointed by all the three actors when questioned about the implications of the new legislation in the functioning of the system. The head of CCISP also uses *an economic language* to legitimise the importance of the binary system, and more specifically, the importance of the polytechnic subsystem. He referred that:

“(...) nowadays, polytechnics can give their qualification at a price that is sometimes half or one third cheaper than universities. The funding for each student per year at universities is around 4000€ and at polytechnics is around 2500€/2800€. This means that, the effort one needs to do (because the county won’t have money) will be smaller if the professional qualification programmes will be implemented on the polytechnic sector” (Teixeira 2009).

With respect to the scenario of financial constraint that higher education systems in general face, Lourtie mentioned that “... with such financial restrictions imposed to HEIs, they are mainly concerned with their survival, in capturing students and therefore less able to contest and/or challenge what the legislation has imposed to them” (Lourtie 2009). This is also one of the reasons justifying the coercive imposition of the legislation. HEIs need to get

as much support from the government as possible in order to allocate more funds, and consequently attract more students and improve their quality.

Both the head of CRUP and the head of CCISP are very straightforward concerning this topic, especially the former when referring to the actual crisis as a contributing factor for the unhealthy competition among HEIs. Therefore he believes that the government should have a more significant role in regulating the national higher education system:

“The higher education system should be regulated. If not we risk to decrease even more our quality levels. I’ve been given examples about how the lack of regulation can lead to lower the quality in the higher education system (...). When HEIs determine their admission requirements, it would be enough if a less demanding institution set lower criteria for starting to *withdraw* students from other institutions, which would see themselves obliged to lower their entrance requirements; consequently the other institutions would feel obliged to lower their standards. If they don’t do that, they will lose students for sure. When institutions have the freedom to create their programmes and their contents, they are free to invent names that sometimes don’t match the real content of the programmes, only with the intention to choose more appealing names in order to attract more students. They can even duplicate programmes in the same city, or in places nearby and multiplying in a completely uncontrolled way the number of existent programmes” (Santos 2009).

Also the head of CCISP, when asked about the effectiveness of the legislation concerning the division of the system, replied that this will only be possible with more regulation from the government. Notwithstanding, his answer is a little biased, once he only considers that universities behave mimetically as polytechnics:

“There isn’t an effective distinction. Well, this distinction would need more regulation from the government, which means not letting polytechnics, as it already happens, to create university programmes and not let the universities to create programmes with a more applied nature, which doesn’t happen (...). Moreover there should be a distinction concerning the funding formula. Otherwise, people naturally run after the competition for image and/or for money” (Teixeira 2009).

Through the different types of sources used in this analysis, it is perceived the way opinions differ when it comes to reflect upon the way the Bologna legislation has been received and applied in the national higher education system and its contributions for the maintenance of the binary system. Nevertheless, it is important to know how the interviewees perceive the ideal binary system, how it should be developed and encouraged and whether it is effective or not to continue pursuing a distinction between universities and polytechnics.

### **5.2.3 Perceptions on the Ideal Model of a Binary System**

The previous chapter introduced the genesis and developments of the vocational sector in Portugal. In order to understand the visions on the ideal binary system each actor

has, it is important to explain the way they see this process. Moreover, this subject was referred by all of them, once it represents the basis of our understanding on the evolution of the national higher education system and therefore, the institutional behaviour throughout the overall process of the implementation of the Bologna process.

Starting with actors' perceptions whether a binary system should exist or not, i.e., whether the interviewees agree or not with the organisation of the system in the current structure, it is possible to identify different opinions between the actors who represent both types of HEIs and the actor who is closer to government. Therefore, when confronted with this question, Lourtie replied that, in his opinion:

“The binary system is only justified as a mean to avoid that all types of HEIs provide the same type of training and education, in the absence or incapacity of strong governance of the HEIs network. I really consider that the existence of only two types of HEIs is too simplistic” (Lourtie 2009).

With respect to the previous answer, also the head of CCISP mentioned that “... this notion that we are all doing the same thing is pernicious for the country. The idea that the polytechnics do all the same thing, that universities aren't different and between them [universities] all have to do the same thing, it can't be good” (Teixeira 2009). Thus, following the initial arguments, Lourtie replied that,

“In practice, what really distinguishes universities and polytechnics is what the law allows them to do. Therefore, when asked about ‘how I think this distinction should be made’, it is implicit that one should agree with the maintenance of the binary system and that's not my opinion. And that's not the most important thing of the Bologna process” (Lourtie 2009).

Differently from Lourtie, the head of CRUP believes that it is important for any economy, any country, the coexistence of two distinct types of education, namely the polytechnic and the university training:

“Any country and any economy need technicians with a conceptual training type, based on projects, research, and people with the ability to look at the problems with a greater degree of abstraction in order to be able to introduce into the existing models alternatives, developments, suggestions and modifications, more or less deeper, depending on each case. On the other hand, one needs to have another type of training, of more practical nature, less abstract, more connected with the reality, for example, men connected to machinery, to tools, more related with supervision, inspection, monitoring of projects, I mean, not so much related to the conceptualisation but to the practical component of the various professions. These two types of preparation complement each other and are essential for any economy. Many foreign stakeholders with whom I've been talk with say that one of the gaps they find in our higher education system is the lack of intermediate technical training. And I see as the most obvious explanation for this the fact that, since 30 years ago one has being *dismantling* the vocational sector” (Santos 2009).

This goes much in line with the opinion expressed by the head of CCISP:

“Yes, sure, I completely agree with the maintenance of the binary system. And it’s not only me. Actually, this is one of the most hilarious situations I’ve seen so far: everyone said that the OECD report would determine the integration of polytechnics within universities. I’ve told you before about the *Pink Map of Integration*... And then, the OECD report said exactly the opposite, that one should maintain the binary system and even reinforce the polytechnic component (...). I really believe that the type of qualifications that the country needs at the present and in the future it’s much more related with the type of training offered by our subsystem, as well as the connection we have with the labour market and with direct employability of our graduates. But one cannot separate this aspect from the origins of the polytechnic subsystem” (Teixeira 2009).

According to these actors, the way the vocational subsystem was created and evolved later on, not only determined polytechnics behaviour but it also induced universities behaviour, especially those which were recently established. Furthermore, in a climate of financial restriction, the possibility of both subsystems developing an unhealthy environment increases. With respect to the early beginnings of the vocational system, the head of CRUP refers that:

“30 years ago, the current polytechnic subsystem was composed by the industrial education branch and then by the commercial and industrial schools. And we have been allowing these schools, that in the meanwhile evolved into polytechnics, would copy universities profile, doing what in Europe is called the academic drift in the polytechnic subsystem, which also drags (one has to be honest), the professional drift of university system. And then we have this situation, which is the present situation, where, with few exceptions, the training provided by both subsystems doesn’t match the real need of diversification and complementarity between both types of education” (Santos 2008).

The same feelings are expressed by the head of CCISP, though, naturally, with a more critical opinion:

“One should not think that polytechnics are the same as universities. Well, not the same, because they are perceived as having lower quality than universities. This idea needs to disappear in order this subsystem can develop. The state contributed a lot for the creation of this idea during all these years. You know why? Let’s look at the origins of our higher education system: we had 3 universities: Lisbon, Porto and Coimbra. Then one saw that they weren’t enough because they were encysted and new universities were established, as the Universities of Aveiro and Minho. And as these new universities needed leeway, they created programmes not in accordance with the university nature, such as civil engineering or chemical engineering, but rather applied programmes because they needed to position themselves as different universities. So they created programmes like ceramics engineering, materials engineering, textile engineering, refrigeration systems... And there’s nothing more linked to the polytechnic training as these programmes because they are completely professional, directly connected to the labour market. Later on, as one needed to invest more in higher education and also to attain greater national cohesion and equity at the regional level, polytechnics were implemented in all district capitals. And how was this implementation achieved? Well, where there wasn’t a university one put there a polytechnic. There wasn’t an implementation process according to the needs of the university or polytechnic network coverage. The logic was that, the places without

universities, one will establish there a polytechnic. So since its creation, polytechnics have obviously a weak appearance. And what polytechnics are expected to do in a scenario like this? Well, as their problem is related with credibility, they can't create such applied programmes as they should, because one will look at them as weaker programmes, without quality. So naturally they resemble the training provided by the classic universities. This weakness in the way polytechnics were created led to a subversion of the type of education they should provide. That's why I believe that the most important thing one needs to do now is to improve the image of the polytechnic subsystem. And this image can be improved if this system itself will be able to achieve greater employability rates and of course, this will attract students (...). But it's important to keep in mind this *shift* in the missions of each sector: new universities engaged in more applied programmes and polytechnics engaged in more general programmes. However, this is a 'natural' behaviour in a competitive system. One will always search for the field one thinks one can earn more. That's why I say, the ones who have the power to regulate the system should do it, but effectively" (Teixeira 2009).

When the head of CRUP referred the actual distinguishing factors of both subsystems, he also pointed out the status of the polytechnic subsystem as a hindrance factor to its own development:

"My point of view on this is that the social stigma remains the main distinguishing factor between polytechnics and universities. Maybe in less scale, but it's still true that the best students search for a place in a public university and the ones who are not that good go to polytechnics. There is also an important factor related with the geographical proximity. Due to economic reasons, many students loose, very soon, the ambition to enrol in an institution which would provide them better conditions for developing their skills with more quality, and they have to choose any institution nearby. Also the topic of scientific research helps to differentiate both subsystems, once the best research units are connected to the best universities and the staff working in these units belongs to universities. It's true that some of the PhD professors of polytechnics also integrate these units, and it's good to be like that. However, I don't have many doubts that the university staff is more professionally prepared for these activities than the staff working on polytechnics" (Santos 2009).

Similar to this view, the head of CCISP believes that nowadays this distinction is made on the perception that a university is better than a polytechnic. Obviously, he regrets this fact, though he is aware that the old problem of credibility that polytechnics face needs time to be diluted. One of the possible solutions for this is:

"The polytechnic gains credibility once you place it in a similar system to the university. The gains now will be measured in terms of increasing employability and I think in the future, the system will move to that: more employability. Other factor that helps in this distinction is the regional dispersion of the vocational sector, more than the type of programmes offered by each subsystem. However, I believe this will change in the near future, with the risk to increased professional drift from the university sector" (Teixeira 2009).

Once the main shortcomings of the operationalisation of the binary system were identified, both actors who agree on the maintenance of this type of organisation suggested

possible solutions in order to improve the overall functioning of the system. In some issues, such as the way the binary divide should exist, the level of required qualifications for the academic staff of both subsystems and issues related with research, one can identify differences according to the type of institutions each interviewee represents. The same attitude holds true when these actors mentioned concepts like “network rationalisation” and “supply (re)organisation”, as they interpret them differently. Therefore, the head of CRUP refers that:

“It is not enough to act on broad definitions of both subsystems. One must create incentives for the creation and development of diversified training. In my opinion, I think that one possibility would be incorporating these two types of education in the same structure, the same intelligence and in the same decision-making body. I mean, one would integrate in the same institutions both programmes of university education and polytechnic education. I admit that there are other feasible solutions. For example, maintaining the present binary system, but then one needs to establish effective criteria which assures that universities won’t enter into polytechnics’ scope of action and vice-versa (...). I’ve been arguing an idea, the creation of academic regions. I know that the problem we’re talking about [an effective distinction between universities and polytechnics] is politically sensitive. I know polytechnics are rooted institutions and with political power and influence and therefore, one cannot always do things that would be better for the system. I’ve been arguing that the creation of academic regions could be a plausible and useful solution. Therefore, universities and polytechnics in a certain region would necessarily have to interconnect in order to organise their educational supply. But this would require incentives and rules to achieve this reorganisation and coordination. Alternatively, as mentioned before, another solution would be to integrate polytechnics into universities, and under the university cloak one would find polytechnic and university education, as it happens in the University of Aveiro and Algarve. But assuming this development would be politically more difficult, in a second line of options, and in order to seek political pragmatism, I propose the existence of this superstructure, which would embrace 2 or 3 universities and 4 or 5 polytechnics in the same region and these would be obliged to coordinate their efforts and their educational supply on a regional basis” (Santos 2009).

From the answers provided by the head of CRUP, one can understand that, despite he defends the maintenance of the binary system, in his opinion, it is more important the coexistence of different types of training, even if these are provided in the same “academic superstructure”. Thus, the organisation of the system is not so important as the type of training a higher education system should have, once he even purposes the integration of polytechnics into universities. Nevertheless, as he mentioned, this depends much on what one expects from a binary system, and therefore different requirements should be demanded from universities and polytechnics. Thus, with respect to the qualifications’ requirements the academic staff of both subsystems should have, his opinion slightly varies from the head of CCISP. As Santos referred, this is an aspect which needs to be differentiated:

“This distinction depends on what we want, because if polytechnic education is expected to be what I think it should be, in my opinion, it makes no sense to establish the same

requirements for the teaching staff in polytechnics and in universities. I mean, the demanding level should be identical, but with different criteria. It's unreasonable to require that, for example, polytechnics have the same or a close percentage of PhDs in their staff as universities have, or even a high percentage of doctorates, especially if we want that polytechnic education will prepare people for the professional practice. It would be probably more appropriate to have in polytechnics staff linked to companies, who would help these students to get a closer connection with the practical work, with machinery man (as I use to say), in a different scale from what happens in universities. But this depends much on the conceptual framework in which we move in, the definitions which were made in advance, because this will determine a useful framework for each subsystem (...). And I really think that there should be experts and people more tied with the real life, with business in universities, but in a different scale. However, concerning to the definition of the *specialist* title, there's still much to do. What is a specialist, how they are defined, how they will qualify, who is going to give them this 'degree'... are important questions, which can open the door, in the typical Portuguese way, to other tricky solutions which will misunderstood the RJIES' good intentions" (Santos 2009).

In turn, the new legal framework of RJIES which demands polytechnics to have at least 15% of their academic staff with a doctoral degree, and besides this value, at least 35% must hold the title of specialist (some of which may also hold the doctoral degree) is identified by the head of CCISP as an advantageous outcome of the reform, once it will help in the promotion of this subsystem.

"The polytechnic subsystem must have this characteristic of being closely connected to the region where it operates. But it also needs to have this notion of quality, and therefore, the idea of a teaching career less demanding or more permissive for the polytechnics is highly pernicious. In this sense, the RJIES is welcomed by me, by demanding an increase in the number of PhD holders at the polytechnic sector. Therefore, we should make the system highly demanding, also for its own professors and consequently demanding in the access conditions" (Teixeira 2009).

Following this argument, Teixeira mentioned an aspect that none of the other respondents referred, and which might help in the distinction of both type of HEIs, namely differences in the way the academic staff is pedagogically evaluated. With respect to the academic career progression, he advocates that professors should have different skills according to, for example, the year of programme he/she has to teach:

"In the Polytechnic of Bragança I prefer a good Mathematics teacher rather than an excellent researcher. Perhaps, if it was a different situation, things would be different. In final year disciplines I prefer someone who is technically very good, with training experience and pedagogical ability because he has to transmit knowledge. So, there should be different approaches. However we demand everything to everyone and a professor needs to be good in everything" (Teixeira 2009).

In this sense, differences in the pedagogical academic evaluation could help the academic staff to focus on different areas, at different stages, and therefore, stimulate



institutional diversity through different evaluated activities. This would improve their commitment and dedication to the tasks they feel more pleased, or are expected to perform.

“In fact, in order to change effectively the teaching-learning paradigm it’s necessary to prepare the classes in a different way. Teachers are required to do everything. Additionally to teaching, the staff is required to prepare lots of papers and to have many research projects and projects involving the community. And, as the teaching part is less valued, it’s the one which naturally will loose more. The application of the Bologna paradigm in the pedagogical evaluation is perhaps one of the less assessed issues. Staff competitions continue to be evaluated according to the number of papers and projects achieved. And of course, one can’t ask people to be highly committed in things in which they aren’t evaluated, once they need to work on other things which will be evaluated” (Teixeira 2009).

Furthermore, it was also mentioned that different teaching-learning paradigms should exist for both types of HEIs, not only as a means to help institutions follow their institutional mission, but as a *tool* in distinguishing both types of subsystems:

“There is no distinction between a teaching paradigm for universities and for polytechnics. Apparently it’s the same. You won’t find any distinction between teaching in a polytechnic or teaching at a university, and the same for learning. There aren’t different learning paradigms for both subsystems. So, each of us had to adapt in a more or less violent way” (Teixeira 2009).

Although there is general agreement with respect to the maintenance of the binary system, it is possible to denote also in this subject some inconsistency during the discourses. As an example, the head of CRUP presented several proposals for the reorganisation of the Portuguese higher education system, of which some of them can contribute to a decrease in institutional diversity. Where one can find full agreement is in the need for a higher education system provides two distinct types of education and training, being these essential for the development of the country.

#### **5.2.3.1 *Network Rationalisation of Higher Education and Supply Organisation: Different actors, different interpretations***

All three interviewed actors, at any given point of their discourses, referred the aforementioned expressions as something that urges to be implemented in the national higher education system. All of them referred that it is urgent to organise the offer of programmes that HEIs provide to their publics and to “pay attention” to the way some institutions recruit and train their students in order to avoid having low quality higher education. Nevertheless, when analysing this issue, one can clearly distinguish the difference of opinions between the polytechnics’ representative and the universities’ representative. Interesting enough is the fact

that both the head of CRUP and Lourtie have similar interpretations on this point. Therefore, the arguments presented here relate to the representatives of these two types of HEIs.

Similar to Lourtie, who advocates the need “... to rapidly restructure the higher education network and its supply” (Lourtie 2009), the head of CRUP refers that for a long time, many rectors had continuously call government’s attention to this issue. Nonetheless, according to him,

“(...) on the Ministry side, the responsibility is continuously thrown up to us, by saying that there isn’t any rationalisation because we don’t do it. And of course, there isn’t any higher education system that is governed without the political orientation of those who have the power to do so, which is the government. In this sense, institutional autonomy has been used as a kind of alibi by politicians, as a tool to get rid of their responsibilities as regulators, because there are decisions that can only be taken by them. It is assumed that in a regime where universities have autonomy, the responsibility should be left to the institutions, they should be self-regulated. But it shouldn’t be like this” (Santos 2009).

Santos (2009) explains that the national system of higher education should not be self-regulated, once this, in the medium/long term, will provide manoeuvre for the less demanding HEIs to lower the quality of the system. When referring to the admission criteria, he provides the following example, and then justifies his opinion:

“There are engineering programmes in Portugal which don’t require Mathematics in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade as an entry discipline to access higher education. As an engineer I can’t understand how this happens! And this is serious because it means that there are institutions which aren’t demanding in their access policies and these institutions will have the less qualified students and will provide them, in the same period of time and with better grades, a diploma that in the labour market has exactly the same value as any other diploma! In 2004-05 I searched for these numbers and I realised that there were 825 different programmes. In this ranking, which I called the *nonsense ranking* there are several ‘labels’, words like management, environment, technology that appear in the majority of the programmes. These can be more or less related with the content of the programme, but anyway it’s no sense! There are nearly 40 programmes in Civil Engineering, 20 programmes of Law! In my opinion, it’s too much! This is another example for what I’ve been saying: without regulation, the system tends to lower its quality. And this, of course, relates to another issue. One needs to concentrate the public investment, which can only be done through the rationalisation of the higher education network and with the reorganisation of the educational supply, in order to reduce the ridiculous excessive number of programmes that currently exist. If this won’t be done soon, one won’t have resources where they are really needed” (Santos 2009).

A completely different view is expressed by the head of CCISP, who highly criticises this point of view:

“I get worried when I hear some rectors’ speeches who say that we must reorganise or rationalise the higher education network because there is a kind of ‘waste’. But always with this idea, that if it would be possible to close the regional structures it would be perfect, because the students of these institutions would go to those universities and therefore they

would get additional budget for that. Best universities can't aim to provide mass higher education. As long as our best universities will concern more in get 1<sup>st</sup> cycle students instead of creating high quality masters and PhD programmes, and of course they would get more money for that because this is more expensive, it will always exist this notion that we are all doing the same thing. This idea partly stems from the funding formula. The funding formula should be calculated and rationalised according to the objectives of each programme and according to what has been achieved in each institution. 90% of the people who talks about network rationalisation, mention this with the perception that there are too many programmes, too many people, too many institutions, there is too much waste in the higher education system and therefore one needs to cut this in order the system become smaller. Well, I also think we should restructure the network but thinking it in a different way! We need to think how are we going to restructure our network in order to include so many people in the system that still lacks training? And how are we going to do this in such a way that it won't be financial unsustainable for the country? This is how people should think, because there are many people who want to be qualified! And of course this would oblige that, for example, a programme that has 30 students in this region, but it has 200 in another place, so we will see why it attracts more students there and analyse if we can move the 30 students to the other region, and therefore this programme will exist in that place. This is my vision of network rationalisation and supply organisation. I think that there is this negativist perspective of some people in the higher education sector. They want to transform the sector into an unhealthy competition for students and money (...). The next challenge for the following government will be qualify the Portuguese people; and it's true that the country has few resources, that's why we need to think how to qualify our people without being such a burden for the state (...)" (Teixeira 2009).

Divergent opinions were also provided when both actors referred to the 2006 OECD report. The head of CRUP agrees on the maintenance of the binary system, though he believes, as it could be perceived through his previous arguments, there should be a reduction in the number of HEIs. According to him, though the explanations provided in the report are plausible enough (which, in turn, are very similar to the rationale provided by the head of CCISP), they do not justify this "... excessive number of institutions for such a small population, as the Portuguese one" (Santos 2009).

"The OECD report argues that the development of the country is dependent on the increase of the schooling rates, and in the medium term we will need these institutions to train the number of citizens who wish to enrol in higher education. In my opinion, this is no sense because in countries more developed than ours, there aren't as many institutions as we have. Anyway, it's an explanation, even if in my opinion sounds not plausible at all. But, following these arguments, the question that I ask is, *who is responsible to pay this excessive number of institutions?* The answer that seems correct to me is the government, because it's the government that wants to ensure this number. However, the truth is that, who is paying this excess is the system itself. I mean, once the budget is defined by the government and this depends on the number of HEIs, then the fact that there are too many institution, obliges those with better quality to not have the quantity of resources they would like to" (Santos 2008).

On the other side, the head of CCISP advocates the opposite argument and refers that the current public network of HEIs is essential for the future development of the country, and therefore he strongly agrees with the rationale provided by the OECD.

“The report refers that Portugal has very low rates of vocational training, and therefore one must increase them. Indeed, they even recommend to not increase the tuition fees as this would bring more efforts for the Portuguese families and they need availability to qualify themselves and their children. In my opinion, the country should be proud of the current higher education network because it's essential, especially for the polytechnics located in the inner land. And I'm not talking only about the economic side; it's much more than that, for example, the cultural part and everything that it's connected with that. The most important achievement in the country after the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, besides freedom, was actually the current network of higher education, because the greatest obligation of a democratic state it's to give its citizens the exercise to a conscious citizenship. That is something that nowadays it's much more important than the economic side; because today a citizen is someone who can exercise his/her citizenship. And one can only achieve that if one has access to culture, which in turn it's only possible with the democratisation in the access to higher education, and this democratisation wouldn't be possible if we hadn't the network we have. I know lots of young people from my village who would never enrol in any higher education programme if the Polytechnic of Bragança didn't exist. And this is much more important than any metrical division of money that many intellectuals are trying to do” (Teixeira 2009).

With respect to this topic, one also identifies completely opposite discourses, although the aforementioned expressions are pointed as key factors for a better performance of the national system of higher education, when appropriately done. Nevertheless, since there is no agreement on the way one should achieve an affective network rationalisation and supply organisation, it still remains to be known how these concepts should be implemented.

#### **5.2.4 Institutional Responses under a Reform Environment**

Chapter II introduced the theoretical framework which allows for a better understanding of institutional behaviour. It was mentioned that HEIs, as complex organisations, do not operate in a vacuum, but rather in an open system. According to the theories exposed, and bearing in mind the environment complexity which surrounds these institutions, it is known that both universities and polytechnics receive inputs from and produce outputs for the environments where they operate.

When analysing the implementation of the Bologna framework in the Portuguese higher education system and therefore the institutional behaviour towards this process, one cannot forget both the external and internal environments where national actors (both the government and HEIs) move. These environments will condition actors' current choices and future trends and explain why they ended up behaving in a specific manner, which normally

tends to be a similar manner. In this sense, one cannot forget two important aspects. First, before the Bologna process, one could already perceive an academic drift on the polytechnic subsystem, which later spread in the inverse phenomenon (professional drift) to the university subsystem. Second, and not less important, in Portugal, the Bologna reform took place in a moment in which the financial suffocation of HEIs reached dramatic levels. Also the Bologna reform is framed in a specific context, in a specific environment with a particular culture. As the head of CRUP explains, "... we have been noticing financial constraints since 1997-98, but it was precisely in the years of the implementation of the Bologna process that the majority of universities had to deal with this situation. Especially now, when there should be a greater financial capacity for institutions to hire more staff, to create smaller classes, to renew the faculty and to involve young researchers, one faces the opposite situation" (Santos 2009). Thus, these economic restrictions will increase not only the competition for financial resources, but also for other type of assets, which indirectly bring more funds to the institutions, as for example, new students and non traditional publics. In this way, it is understandable the common wish of the representatives of both types of HEIs. They believe that more governmental intervention will help to define specific standards according to the type of education and to the type of programme each student chose, and therefore it will improve the overall image and quality of the system. In this sense, institutional autonomy can function as a double edge sword. On the one hand it provides public institutions to start their programmes and to set the admission criteria, allowing them great room for manoeuvre. One can say that it is a vital resource for institutions to achieve what they perceive necessary for their development. On the other hand, institutions should use their autonomy as the foremost tool to achieve and to improve quality. Nevertheless, it was discussed here that, since the moment HEIs are self-regulated and have completely freedom to decide on the way and to whom they should provide their programmes, and simultaneously, not forgetting the scarcity resources environment they face at the present moment, the positive outcomes of autonomy are therefore used inaccurately. Thus, as the head of CRUP explains:

"Autonomy is a tool to ensure quality in higher education and it should only be used for this purpose and properly regulated. In this way, it can't be confused with absolute authority and consequently decrease the quality of the system" (Santos 2009).

In a highly competitive environment, institutions will seek for all the possible factors which will assure them conformity to their environment, or at least to maintain the position they have in the system. This explains why both universities and polytechnics still follow the trend to occupy certain fields of study, specific areas of knowledge that, in principle, are

‘reserved’ for only one of the subsystems. Isomorphic behaviour among different types of institutions and between them is still a recurrent behaviour in the Portuguese higher education system. As Lourtie (2009) explains,

“All institutions tend to occupy similar areas to their expertise field: by taking to the limit what the legislation allows them to provide in terms of programmes supply, or by offering similar programmes in scientific fields of other schools, even within the same university or polytechnic” (Lourtie 2009).

The same ideas were expressed by the head of the CCISP, who refers that:

“(…) as long as HEIs think they can earn something in doing that, occupy areas of expertise that were not specific for them, they will continue to do it. For example, until now, polytechnics have tended to create more generalist programmes, while universities have chosen to design more applied programmes. However, in my opinion, people will become more interested in programmes of vocational nature, such as something related to renewable energies, web design, and games design. The drift we will witness now will be a professional drift from the university subsector. And, in my opinion, the Bologna process will favour this professional drift because, if, on one hand universities provide the integrated master, which is something very attractive for a potential new student of engineering, on the other hand, universities will feel tempted to provide short term programmes, highly applied and driven to the labour market” (Teixeira 2009).

The idea that “we are all doing the same”, so criticised by the head of CCISP, reflects this isomorphic behaviour, which is indeed *pernicious* for the country, once institutional diversity becomes blurred and institutions dilute the possibility of market niches’ pursuit. According to the interviewees, another aspect which contributes to increase mimetic behaviour between institutions relates to the funding formula. This issue gains a renewed importance in such an environment of financial crisis and in the frame of the knowledge economy. Several aspects, as well as possibilities, were presented by the actors. The main message was that institutions should be funded according to their mission, their objectives and their outputs. Nevertheless, for the polytechnic sector, and mainly due to the way it was created, there is still a social stigma and lack of external dimension to fight. Once this is recognised, and though change takes time to be assimilated, the head of CCISP provided some examples of initiatives which can help to solve this issue. The creation of consortia or associations between institutions of the same type is pointed as extremely positive. One example of this type of collaboration initiatives which Teixeira referred was the creation of three joint master programmes offered by four polytechnic institutions (Bragança, Viana do Castelo, Cávado and Ave and Porto). These programmes have the same curriculum, the same professors, who move from institution to institution, and as the final diploma will be signed by these four institutions, it will have an increased perception of quality in the labour market. As the head of CCISP

explained, “... each institution has contributed with the best assets it has, according to its location, of course” (Teixeira 2009). In his view, it is possible to effectively divide both subsystems, once the binary division is an asset for the national system of higher education. As he referred, differently from Lourtie, and to a certain extent from the head of CRUP, the solution should never be the integration of polytechnics into universities:

“(...) one should never merge polytechnics into universities. This would make that the prestige, the image that these institutions have in their region and the defences they were able to create throughout time will decrease and later on they will disappear. The natural flow would be a migration of the parts of this fusion to the main institution. Within some time, the higher education network would be destroyed. I understand that much of these institutions lack dimension, an exterior image, but that’s why I say that one needs to promote them through the creation of consortia and partnerships with other institutions, as an example. In this way, their autonomy would remain stable and the institutions which take part of these programmes would obviously have gains, image gains” (Teixeira 2009).

During this section, one can notice another interesting aspect. Despite isomorphic behaviour among different types of institutions and between them still occurs, both the head of CCISP and the head of CRUP claim for the persistence of a binary system (even if with the multiple interpretations this has). These discourses, as well as institutional behaviour should be framed within the environments described throughout this study.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

From the analysis provided alongside this chapter, important aspects related to the way the national higher education system received the Bologna process were mentioned. Nevertheless, as the focus of the study is to gain deeper insights on the way the binary structure is being preserved after this reform, one searched for indicators which could answer to the research questions. In this sense, through the qualitative analysis of the national legislation which implemented the Bologna framework, and other documentation analysis as the OECD and the BFUG reports, as well as scientific articles, it is perceptible the government intentions in promoting the binary divide. Additionally, the quantitative analysis performed through the MCTES and GPEARI sources, where one can clearly see the relative numerical advantage of universities over polytechnics concerning the number of programmes approvals, provided further materials and reliability to answer to the questions proposed here. Therefore, it seems apparently clear that the Portuguese government used the Decree-Law 74/2006 as a coercive tool to strengthen the different institutional missions of both subsystems. Furthermore, when answering to the questions “How are HEIs reacting to governmental initiatives?” and “which type of HEIs had more difficulties in the transition to

the Bologna paradigm?” the numbers speak for themselves. Due to law restrictions and lack of staff capacity, polytechnics were hindered to provide 2nd cycle programmes. On the other hand, as they already had a 3+2 degree structure, it was not so difficult for them to adapt and create 1<sup>st</sup> cycle studies. The opposite situation was experienced by the university subsystem, which had more manoeuvre to create master programmes and were able to introduce integrated masters in their offer. Thus, one can see that the core of the reform was performed among the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cycles of studies, and its impact actually varies according to the type of subsystem one is analysing. Nevertheless, the perceptions expressed by the representatives of universities and polytechnics are not so clear when discussing the division of the binary system. A different opinion is expressed by Lourtie, once he has been linked to the government since the birth of the Bologna declaration.

Interesting enough is the fact that some examples provided by both the head of CRUP and the head of CCISP reflect contrary opinions to what they feel. This was particularly visible when both actors agreed on the fact that there are low levels of vocational training in the country. Despite the governmental efforts which are being made in order to promote polytechnics, namely through the creations of CETs and the “New Opportunities Programme”, their views remain quite unchanged. Or, in other words, though they recognise an increase in vocational supply, they do not connect it directly with governmental policies. This was also felt when they say that there is no real distinction in both subsystems, but argued later that, the fact that only universities can award the doctoral degree helps the clarification. Common to all interviewees was the feeling that isomorphic behaviour among HEIs is still a recurrent practice expressed through the academic drift in polytechnics and through the professional drift at the university subsystem, which is considered to be a more recent phenomenon. At this point, and referring to the risks that the legislation concerning the Bologna process has on the binary divide, one could perceive differences in the perceptions of these actors, and therefore on the way they interpret and implement the government’s orders. While the head of CRUP sees the new legal framework for HEIs (RJIES) as a stimulating factor for isomorphic behaviour, and therefore the consequent dismantling of the binary system; the head of CCISP looks at RJIES as a tool to promote the polytechnic subsystem, once it will help to dilute their old problem related with low quality perceptions. This was one of the current distinguishing factors between universities and polytechnics in which all the respondents agreed. As referred by them all, it is still valid the social stigma that polytechnics are perceived as higher education of lower quality, and therefore, this does justice to the



description provided in the previous chapter concerning the type of students (and familiar background) attending polytechnics and universities. Other aspects, such as the geographic location and the differences concerning research capacity, much more prominent in the university subsystem, were presented as distinctive factors. Therefore, one can notice that, indeed, there is a distinction between these types of institutions. Whether it was Bologna itself or the overall environment of reform, or a combination of these factors once Bologna did not occur in a vacuum, the fact is that one can disguise signs of change in the functioning of the system. Nevertheless, the government *per se* cannot make the difference. It should be a process of constant “negotiation” between both parties. Furthermore, as Lourtie referred, “The Bologna process, as well as other reforms, involves cultural changes. This is very difficult to achieve, I even dare to say impossible, only with the drafting of legislation” (Lourtie 2009).

One can see that institutions’ responses to government actions vary according to the type of subsystem, and within universities and polytechnics they vary according to the way their leaders interpret them and, at last, these responses vary according to what institutions feel they can *gain* or not with such reforms. Naturally, in a competitive environment, especially at a time when the financial constraint reached its peak and there is a constant fear that the number of students enrolled in the higher education sector will decrease, institutions tend to explore as maximum as possible what the legislation allows them to do, as Lourtie (2009) referred. This does not mean that HEIs stop to demand more resources, tangible or not, from their government. As the head of CRUP mentioned when describing the overall endeavour of the government in the reform,

“The weight of a political reform is also measured through the resources the government puts to achieve it, and through this perspective, I mean, measured in this manner, one can say that the present government has given little attention to the reform of the Bologna process” (Santos 2009).

Furthermore, in the current uncertainty environment, institutions fear to receive less financial support from the government. This, naturally, would bring several consequences, of which the major concern relates on the implications among students’ choices. Indeed, the most disastrous consequence this might bring would be for those students whose families do not have enough possibilities to provide them a higher education degree. As the head of CRUP referred:

“What I fear most is that this reform will be traduced in a higher distance from government towards its higher education system. This could happen if this or the next government decided to stop funding the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle studies and would only fund the 1<sup>st</sup> cycles. I mean, first it reduced the traditional degrees of 5 or 4 years to 3 years and then it would reduced the funding according to this reduction. This would be tragic, because it

would hamper students to have access to the minimum level of higher education for performing a profession. I hope this is not going to happen, but I admit that the temptation is huge, especially in such a context of economic restrictions. We, who are responsible for the institutions, and against the political discourse that there is no one left outside the higher education system due economic reasons, we see this number growing everyday. This is tragic, when a country wishes to base its development in the so-called 'knowledge economy', but without a qualified part of the population which can't have access to higher education for economic reasons" (Santos 2009).

This argument goes much in line with what the head of CCISP mentioned about the need to invest more in the polytechnic sector, once this can qualify the Portuguese people at a lower cost than universities do.

Throughout this analysis one could also perceive the ideas of these actors concerning the existence of the ideal model of a binary system. One can conclude that the representative of the polytechnic subsystem (and contrary to the overall trend of the polytechnics in trying to be integrated in universities to therefore gain some prestige) was the interviewee that most firmly defended a clear separation of universities and polytechnics. On the opposite extreme one will find Lourtie, who does not perceive such a division as significant decision for the country. Other solutions were purposed by the representative of the university subsystem, who defends the concept of 'academic regions', as a mean to achieve 'political pragmatism and consensus' and, simultaneously as a tool to rationalise the higher education network and programme supply.

It was also clear that there are possible developments for the preservation and development of the binary system and, at the present, the risk to evolve to a unitary system is lower when compared to the early stages of discussions and proposals about the Bologna reform. Thus, as the head of CRUP referred,

"One doesn't need to invent anything. We must look for examples where they exist and then, adapt them to our reality. Not geometric or mechanically, because we have different laws, different people, different culture and a different government from other countries. This is our reality, this is our culture, and therefore we have to perform according to what the country needs most" (Santos 2009).

## 6. General Conclusions

Driven by the ambition of transforming Europe in the “knowledge economy”, through the creation and promotion of the EHEA, the Bologna process has achieved, at the international and national levels, unparalleled success. Politically, it represents the most far reaching reform of higher education and it traduces the growing geographical and political expansion of the European Union.

The Bologna process cannot however be separated from the new economic, regulatory and social pressures that higher education systems face globally (indeed, this might be one of the reasons which makes this topic so passionate). In this sense, when discussing the theoretical and conceptual framework which grounds the theme of this research, it was argued that Bologna is seen as an international response to the global environment where HEIs operate. Therefore, despite its non binding character, the signatory countries were *globally* impelled to sign the declaration. Nevertheless, within these new pressures, institutions were free to decide on the way they would implement the Bologna action lines. That is why the main strategies used in the implementation process are neither truly top-down nor bottom-up in their nature, but rather hybrid approaches. The challenge is thus to find a balance between such a complexity of actors and levels involved, while simultaneously respecting each nation’s identity and diversity. Furthermore, the Bologna process, by aiming at the creation of a common higher education area until 2010, it allowed for each signatory country the discussion on the *harmonisation* and *rationalisation* of its own higher education system.

In Portugal, this collective thinking of the organisation of the system left mixed feelings on the two main actors involved: the government and HEIs. The role of these actors in the promotion of the current binary organisation of the national higher education system is, for all the reasons exposed here, the central focus of the analysis. And, in Portugal as in other countries, Bologna did not occur in a vacuum. As Amaral and Magalhães (2008) explained

“The changes in governing and governance structures that one can identify in the field of higher education are to be understood, on the one hand, in the context of the changing nature of Western economies under the pressure of intense globalisation and, on the other hand, in the context of the increasing complexity of societies as these evolve from the traditional concept of nation-state and become less and less homogeneous and predictable. The regulation in European states increasingly reflects the re-composition of national sovereignty and their position in the knowledge based society and economy” (2008).

Also in the national higher education system there was a gradual distance on the government's side from its traditional role of governing. This was an aspect highly criticised by both representatives of universities and polytechnics, which among other factors, pointed the rise of the NPM and the development of theories which emphasise market competition within the higher education sector, as a means used to provide effectiveness to the system. The reduction of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle degrees which used to last 5 or 4 years to 3 years was pointed as an example. This was also the starting point of the research interest, once the initial curiosity was to discover how the polytechnic subsystem would survive to this reform. Indeed, the initial argument was to find evidence on the way the binary system would be maintained after the Bologna process would be nationally implemented.

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses provided evidence on the Portuguese government intentions of preserving and even reinforcing the binary structure. Naturally, this decision created proponents and opponents, once opinions vary according to what one feels and desires for the system. Additionally, opinions vary according to the type of subsystem, and within universities and polytechnics, opinions vary among the different levels of involvement academic and administrative staff has (Veiga and Amaral 2009). Therefore, it was priceless for this research to have the insights from such key actors of the national higher education system.

With respect to the policy process of thinking and deciding the organisation of the system, it was clear that the implementation of the Bologna process in Portugal was achieved through "... a normal process of what should be the relationship between the state and its citizens" (Teixeira 2009). Thus, after the moment the Decree-Law 74/2006 was passed, and despite HEIs agreed or not with the decision of preserving the binary divide, they had to behave in accordance with what was established there. The quantitative analysis provided by the number of programmes approved for each subsystem evidenced the coercive way in which the division of the system was achieved. This was complemented through the content analysis of the Decree-Law 74/2006 (and subsequent legislation) and the respondents' views. Indeed, the answer for the research problem, *how is the Portuguese government dealing with the changes created by the Bologna process in the structure of the national system of higher education?* seems to achieve overall consensus. Nevertheless, one should also remember that, due to the short period of time that the government conceded to HEIs to adapt their programmes, it is possible to admit that, at least in the first stage, the implementation process was merely

administrative. Indeed, all the respondents confirmed that “In Portugal, the idea that the Bologna reform is already in place would be overoptimistic. This perspective does not take into account a number of reforms that still need to be implemented by higher education institutions” (Veiga and Amaral 2009: 60).

Also related with the implementation process, different opinions were exposed concerning to the difficulties found by both universities and polytechnics when adapting to the Bologna paradigm. Though the legislation is more restrictive to the polytechnic subsystem, which is also perceptible by the numerical advantage universities had in the creation of 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle master programmes, the head of CCISP feels that polytechnics were previously used to this type organisation, once the 3+2 model was already in place.

Through this research, another interesting finding came out from the combination of the theoretical framework and the analysis of the creation of the vocational subsystem with the empirical materials. When confronted with the question about the way the binary system should exist (and whether it should exist), both the head of CRUP and the head of CCISP referred the importance of different types of training for the development of the country. Nevertheless, their perceptions on how this should be attained varied substantially. On the university side, one can say that there is not a real interest on the *physical or geographical* division between both types of HEIs. According to the head of CRUP, the ideal binary system could perfectly work as an integrated one, where universities would be the main superstructure for both types of training. Recognising the political and social difficulties of such change, he suggested the creation of academic regions, where a set of universities and polytechnics would have to arrange their programmatic supply in a coherent way. On the university side, it is indeed perceived a kind of wish for an integrated system. This is understandable when one frames the Bologna reform in the national and international context HEIs are experiencing. As the theories aforementioned analysed explain, in a scarcity of resources climate and of growing uncertainty, the first instinct of any institution relates with its survival and to attain as maximum resources as possible. In Portugal, the higher education sector is undergoing serious financial constraints, partly because “... there is an excessive number of HEIs in the country” (Santos 2009). Thus, as the public funding is distributed by all public institutions and allocated according to the number of enrolments each institution has, in this perspective, it is understandable that universities wish to become the “shelter” of weaker institutions, such as polytechnics. Though the head of CCISP argues a different view, this behaviour goes much in line with his idea of what is happening at the present time in the Portuguese higher education

system. He advocates that, in a crisis environment, institutions mainly compete for assets and students, therefore creating the idea that “we are all doing the same”, and destroying the possible effective binary division which should exist. Several solutions were provided by him, but the main argument lays on the following:

“It can’t be a purpose for the best universities to provide mass higher education. They should be focused on the creation of highly qualified master and doctoral programmes in order to avoid their survival and consequently, to avoid brain drain” (Teixeira 2009).

Indeed, all the respondents agreed on the fact that the way public funds are distributed contributed for the blurring of institutional mission. Mimetic behaviour seems thus a natural outcome for institutions when interacting in a competitive and highly challenging environment. Additionally, this implies on quality levels, which many times are relegated to second place, once institutions give priority to attract more students than to their own profile improvement.

Another interesting solution for the reduction of institutional isomorphism was presented by the head of CCISP, who advocates the existence of differences in the teaching-learning paradigm for both subsystems, as well as, differences in the way the academic staff is evaluated. These differences need to take into account not only the type of subsystem, but also the cycle of studies and within this, the years (initial or terminal) the professor has to lecture.

In order to solve the problem of lack of external dimension and prestige which polytechnics face since their establishment and which has been its major hindrance to the assertion in the higher education ‘market’, Teixeira referred to collaboration initiatives as a plausible and effective solution. In this way, he exemplified the creation of master programmes jointly offered by four polytechnics, in which each institution contributes with the best assets it has. The final diploma, issued by the four institutions, will have an increased perceived value in the labour market, contributing to increase the levels of employability of the system and consequently, to improve the image of this subsector, as actually, the latest figures show. Furthermore, this allows for market niche pursuit, which in turn contributes to strengthen institutional diversity.

This research also suggested that there are different interpretations for concepts which seem, apparently, clear enough. Different perceptions on the way the higher education network should be rationalised and on the way the programmes and their curricula should be

organised have implications on the development of the national higher education system. Furthermore, these concepts entail with them more than political decisions. It goes beyond that. The way one decides on the rationalisation of the higher education network will certainly impact the cultural and economic development of a certain region. This is especially valid for the inland regions, where there are only polytechnics and, enrolling in the closest public university might not be, due to economic factors, a possible choice for a student who wishes to enrol in higher education. Moreover, due to the latest government initiatives in promoting the polytechnic subsystem through the creation of CETs and changing the legal framework in order to allow non traditional students, older than 23 years old to access higher education, it is believed that polytechnics are gaining growing importance when it comes to choose the type of higher training one wants to enroll. Thus, reflecting upon the last research question, *whether Portugal will maintain a binary system, or it would be possible that in the long run, the present system converges into a unitary one?*, it seems clear that, despite this possibility will certainly always exist (as also the reverse situation, if we had a unitary system), it was provided sufficient evidence to conclude a movement in the opposite direction. Naturally, the ‘temptation’ of both subsystems to occupy fields of knowledge which are not indicted for them will continue to exist. But this is a ‘natural’ behaviour of a competitive environment and of a common wish of always want to attain higher. And, despite governmental intervention seems to have gained more support in the last years, the way institutions decide to use their autonomy to deal with the environment where they operate seems to go beyond the visible hand of the state. Or, as Amaral and Magalhães (2005) referred, “... binary systems are based on a political suspicion: the elitism implicit within the university subsystem” (2005: 126).

## 6.1 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

As in other signatory countries, Portugal used the Bologna process to pursue objectives which were not directly linked with the reform. This makes it difficult to compare or measure the changes happening as current reforms in the Portuguese higher education system or as reforms undertaken as part of the Bologna process. Indeed, it can be argued that even before Bologna, one could already observe an academic drift from the polytechnic subsystem and a professional drift from the university subsystem. Nevertheless, for the

purpose of this study, it was more relevant to analyse the contribution of the Bologna legislation in the maintenance and promotion of the binary system.

The topic, as well as the available time for writing the thesis, determined the methodology chosen. In this sense, it would be interesting to carefully analyse the curricula of several programmes from both traditional and more recent universities and polytechnics. It should be also interesting to interview students of both subsystems, in different cycles of studies, as well as potential new higher education students, and analyse their perceptions on the type of subsystem they are enrolled and/or think to enrol (this, indeed, could be a future study). Nevertheless, from the insights provided by the interviews, it was perceptible that in both subsystems and within them, there are many similar programmes, with similar designations and which might not correspond to the reality. Thus, as the focus of the research was to analyse the aspects which indeed contributed to an effective division of the system, this would be a valuable study. In this sense further attention needs to be given to the aspects mentioned by the interviewees as hindrance factors for differentiation, namely the funding formula and those concerned to the evaluation procedures of the academic staff. In this sense, this study could also be enriched if more interviews have been done, for example to professors, administrative staff (and students), once they were important actors on the reform process and they must have different opinions, at least in what fears and hopes is considered.

It should also be mentioned that the analysis here provided did not include the private sector, which actually has significant weight in the whole system of higher education. Its legal specificities, namely the autonomy level, could help to improve this work. Nevertheless, these were the possible actors and the possible sector to analyse bearing in mind the available time.

When reflecting upon topics for future research, there is one aspect that immediately jumps into my mind: the employability of after-Bologna graduates. I personally believe that it would be extremely interesting to analyse the social perceptions and subsequent levels of employability of the recent Bologna graduates. It would be valuable to gather information on the impact of the transition to the new two-tier cycle degrees; for example to know the acceptance of the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle graduates in the labour market and if the qualifications they got in those three years meet the labour market requirements (this would need naturally to take into account the overall crisis environment). It should also be interesting to observe the evolution of the curricula supply from both subsystems and analyse whether the binary division has been successful. Furthermore, this analysis would also provide insights on the evolution of the labour market and the programmes perceived as having more significance.



Studies on the contribution of HEIs in the development of the region where they are settled should also be encouraged. Nevertheless, these studies should not only analyse the economic side, but also the cultural and societal role, once this contributes for improving the quality of life of its inhabitants. Comparative studies are a valuable learning tool and therefore, the way other signatory countries reorganised their higher education systems should also be analysed.

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## Legislation

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# APPENDIX 1

## Interview Guideline

### I – Policy Process of the Bologna Process:

1. What has been (name of the institution/person) position concerning the implementation of the Bologna Process (BP)?
2. How do you describe the overall process of policy design concerning the implementation of the BP in Portugal?
  - 2.1 Was there any kind of cooperation between higher education institutions (HEIs) and the government? Were there any “agreements”/ “negotiations” between these two parties?

### II – Challenges to the Binary System:

1. Do you agree with the maintenance of the binary system? Why (not)?
  - 1.1 In your opinion, what really distinguishes universities and polytechnics?
  - 1.2 How this distinction should be made?
2. What challenges the BP posed to the functioning of the binary system? At the present these challenges still remain?
  - 2.1 Do you consider that the new legislation (concerning to the implementation of the BP) helps HEIs to easily pursue their institutional mission, or it can rather create a “competition”/”tension” climate between both subsystems?
  - 2.2 Do you see/feel any trends (drift) in both subsystems to try to occupy areas (of expertise) that are not reserved to them? For example, in the 1st cycle of studies it is already possible to notice differences between universities and polytechnics, or this difference it is not yet perceived?
3. Towards the Bologna reform, did you feel any reluctance to change by HEIs?
  - 3.1 What type of HEIs, universities or polytechnics, did you feel more reluctant in implementing the new legislative framework? Why?

### III – Perceptions on HEIs and the environments (external and internal) where they operate:

1. How do you describe HEIs behaviour concerning students’ enrolments procedures?
2. With respect to employability concepts, are there any differences between both types of institutions?
4. In order to meet the new legal framework for HEIs, polytechnics are required to have, at least, 15% of their academic staff with a doctoral degree, and, besides this value, at least 35% must hold the title of specialist, of which may also hold the doctoral degree. At the university subsystem these figures rise to 50%. How did HEIs react to these numbers?

4.1 What kind of strategies universities/polytechnics use to address this goal? Which subsystem is facing more difficulties to meet these figures?

5. When analysing the number of programmes offered for the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of studies by both types of institutions, one can notice the “numerical advantage” from the polytechnic subsystem. In your opinion, which factors explain this situation?

5.1 The same does not hold true with the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of studies. In your opinion, what restricted polytechnics scope of action?

## **V – Perceptions on the results:**

1. Do you consider that there is a mismatch between the objectives of the Bologna declaration, the national reality and the way HEIs have been obeying to the legislation?

2. In a general way, throughout this process, there is a current discourse about opportunities and challenges. In your personal view, what is the major advantage of this reform?

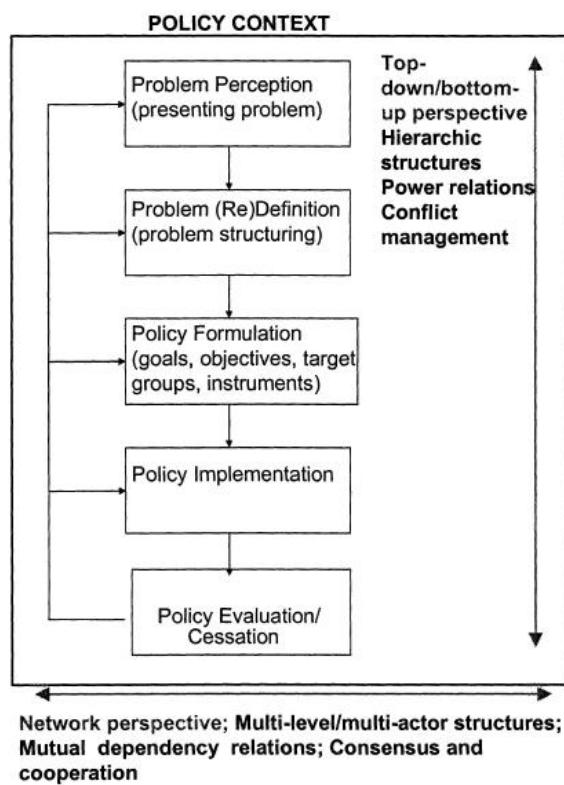
2.1 And which are the risks that you fear most?

3. How do you describe the results achieved since the beginning of the implementation process until now, in what the separation of both subsystems is concerned.

4. What would you like to have happened in the Portuguese system of higher education, but so far it was not possible?

## APPENDIX 2

### Policy Context Framework, Enders 2003



Source: Enders et al. 2003: 8

## **APPENDIX 3**

**Seminar on Academic education and vocational training (vocational courses)  
held in Porto, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 2003**

**“SEMINÁRIO III. 27 DE MAIO DE 2003**

**Educação académica e capacitação profissional (cursos profissionalizantes)**

### **INTRODUÇÃO**

O processo de Bolonha, ao pretender criar a área europeia do ensino superior, está a ter a grande virtude de estimular a discussão sobre a forma de organização do sistema europeu de ensino superior.

Esta discussão está a centrar-se no grande objectivo que é a harmonização do sistema de ensino superior. Porém, torna-se necessário que, em cada estado membro, essa discussão assente noutra que é a harmonização e racionalização do próprio sistema de ensino superior.

Em Portugal, tem havido uma longa discussão entre os objectivos formativos e áreas de influência dos nossos dois principais subsistemas de ensino superior: Universitário e Politécnico.

O processo de Bolonha, ao pretender que os estudantes tenham uma qualificação para o mercado de trabalho logo após o primeiro ciclo de estudos, parece vir atenuar ainda mais as diferenças que se enunciaram para distinguir os dois subsistemas: a Universidade mais vocacionada para o saber-saber, e o Politécnico mais vocacionado para o saber-fazer.

Sendo este seminário subordinado ao tema da “Educação académica e capacitação profissional: cursos profissionalizantes”, o Grupo de Trabalho entendeu dever privilegiar a análise dos elementos distintivos dos dois subsistemas de ensino superior e sobre as formas como estes dois subsistemas se podem harmonizar, para mais facilmente se harmonizar o sistema português com os princípios enunciados pelo processo de Bolonha.

Mereceu também a atenção do Grupo de trabalho a dependência dos sistemas de ensino superior relativamente aos organismos profissionais, no que diz respeito ao reconhecimento da capacitação profissional.

Em Portugal tem-se vindo a implementar sistemas de acreditação da formação académica, por parte de organismos profissionais. O grau académico tem-se tornado, por isso, uma condição para solicitar autorização e não um direito ao exercício de uma actividade profissional. A Licenciatura, como forma de obter a licença para o exercício de uma profissão está, assim, a desaparecer.

As organizações profissionais (por exemplo, as ordens) ao deterem a capacidade legal para realizarem sistemas de acreditação ou exames de acesso à profissão, passaram a ter a capacidade de influenciar fortemente as estruturas curriculares. Porém, algumas questões merecem ser analisadas.

Sendo as organizações profissionais estruturas cooperativas, não haverá o risco dessas influências serem condicionadas por tentativas de limitar o acesso à profissão? E sendo essa influência determinada pelo que se faz hoje, não há o risco dessa estimular uma formação demasiadamente centrada nas exigências presentes, prejudicando a evolução técnico profissional? Ou seja, privilegiar o emprego mas não a empregabilidade.

É reconhecido que o processo de Bolonha vem criar oportunidades para se reformular o sistema de ensino Português. Mas essa reformulação vai exigir mais do que “simples” alterações nas designações dos ciclos de formação. Irá exigir alterações profundas nas formas de relacionamento entre o estado e o sistema de ensino superior e entre o estado e os utilizadores do sistema. E, neste aspecto, as consequências sobre o sistema de financiamento e avaliação das universidades decorrentes da implementação do processo de Bolonha poderá ser um ponto crítico, pelo que foi também objecto de reflexão por parte deste grupo de trabalho.

Enunciadas as questões motivadas por este seminário, foi pedido ao Grupo de Trabalho constituído por académicos dos diferentes subsistemas de ensino, que apresentassem as suas contribuições. O documento que aqui se apresenta pretende sintetizar tais contribuições.

## **1.1 REFLECTIR SOBRE O SISTEMA NACIONAL DE ENSINO SUPERIOR PARA PERCEBER A SUA ARTICULAÇÃO COM O PROCESSO DE BOLONHA: OS ELEMENTOS DISTINTIVOS ENTRE O ENSINO SUPERIOR POLITÉCNICO VS UNIVERSITÁRIO**

As contribuições recebidas sobre este ponto são unânimes em considerar mal definida a separação entre os dois subsistemas.

Não parece ser o carácter profissionalizante que os distingue, pois tal parece ser uma característica comum aos dois subsistemas. Entende-se que os estudantes de qualquer dos subsistemas estudam com vista ao futuro exercício de uma qualquer profissão, entendida esta como actividade empresarial, científica, académica ou outra.

Poder-se-á defender que

1.1.1. o ensino universitário privilegia o saber-pensar e o politécnico o saber-fazer;

1.1.2. que as universidades responsabilizar-se-iam por um ensino mais científico e os politécnicos por um ensino mais aplicado;

1.1.3. que a universidade faz investigação fundamental e o politécnico faz apenas investigação aplicada, etc.

Porém, estas separações são difíceis de demonstrar pois o ensino técnico deve ser sempre acompanhado de uma base teórica para se aprender a saber-fazer. E é indiscutível a forte componente técnica (executora) de muita formação universitária...

O tipo de investigação também não é um elemento seguro para caracterizar um sistema pois tal separação é, já de si, artificial. É comum que grupos de investigação fundamental, independentemente de pertencerem a universidades ou a politécnicos, apliquem a sua experiência a problemas mais concretos.

*Foi também proposto que os elementos distintivos entre os dois subsistemas não deviam existir. Deveriam antes resultar da sua estratégia de actuação e da capacidade científica e tecnológica e não da designação que actualmente as caracteriza.*

*Nesta linha, os subsistemas desapareceriam, transformando-se num sistema único, em que o que distinguiria as instituições seria a sua capacidade para dar uma formação mais orientada para a transmissão de conhecimento (independentemente do carácter mais prático ou teórico da formação) ou orientadas também para a criação de conhecimento (as teaching schools e as research schools?).*

*Esta proposta implicaria a ruptura do actual sistema de organização do ensino superior. Tal é visto por outros como um erro, comparável ao de se ter abolido, nos anos 70, as escolas industriais e comerciais ao nível do ensino secundário.*

*Defende-se que universidades e politécnicos devem assumir claramente a diferença das suas vocações, missões, actividades e tipos de cursos leccionados, alertando-se para o risco de que a não diferenciação possa criar a prazo um sistema de ensino desconexo e com redundâncias desnecessárias, através de uma crescente confusão entre aquilo que é ensino superior universitário e politécnico. A forma de clarificar os seus papéis seria, por exemplo, através da criação de graus académicos com perfil e designações diferentes, limitando a formação do segundo ciclo de estudos a instituições com níveis mínimos de capacidade científica.*

(...)"

Gonçalves et al. 2003, my emphasis.

## APPENDIX 4

### The OECD review

(...)

#### *The structure of higher education: the binary divide*

7.23 The contribution of institutions to the achievement of national strategic goals for the higher education sector will vary according to their particular niches. The challenge in co-ordinating a diverse higher education system is how to steer the system in such a way that this differential contribution is realised.

7.24 The Review Team recommends that the binary framework should be maintained and strengthened. The mechanisms for resource allocation, levels of institutional autonomy, programme accreditation procedures and human resource management policies all need to be reformed to create a policy environment in which professionally orientated polytechnic institutions can create a sustainable future that is distinct from universities. It is recommended that the government should introduce comprehensive university and polytechnic legislation in which the autonomy of institutions is clearly defined and the different roles of universities and polytechnics are specified. Equally important is the corollary of the creation of this new policy environment: universities should be specifically and unambiguously excluded from entering programme areas and levels of award that are outside their core area of business, and which properly reside within the polytechnic sector. Polytechnics should be specifically tasked to develop employable graduates with advanced technical skills and practical know-how, underpinned by analytical, problem-solving and communication abilities of a high order. They should also participate in the New Opportunities Programme. They should be resourced specifically to develop new delivery modes and services to meet the diverse learning needs of an enlarged student body. The major mechanisms for doing this should be the negotiated performance contracts, as outlined below, as well as the significant changes in institutional autonomy and governance proposed for both universities and polytechnics.

7.25 A variety of new pathways will need to be opened for learners, including post-secondary and further education diploma courses and short-cycle degrees. For each level of award, the qualifications of university graduates and polytechnic graduates should be defined separately and distinctively. The different roles of universities and polytechnics should be clarified in terms of the different capabilities and attributes expected of graduates who successfully complete a programme of studies leading to the award of a Portuguese qualification. The CCES should have a central role in that regard.

7.26 Within the broad binary framework confirmed in Decree-Law 74/2006 the primary institutional location of first- and short-cycle professional programmes should be the polytechnic sector. Yet the aspirations of many in this sector are in the opposite direction: the further development of Master programmes, an increase in the proportions of staff holding PhDs, an attempt to secure the right to offer PhD programmes, the expansion of research programmes and eventually the achievement of university status. To some extent these aspirations reflect traditional academic values (that drive academic drift in many countries), but they are also strategic responses to the inadequacies of the current policy environment within which the polytechnic sector works(...) (OECD 2006: 99-100)."



## APPENDIX 5

### Figures from Chapter V – Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 8 - Number of unemployed graduates registered in the Employment Centre, according to the type of HEI and degree, June 2008**

Type of Subsystem		<i>Bacharel</i>		<i>Licenciado</i> (1 <sup>st</sup> cycle)		<i>Mestre</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle, Master)		<i>Doutor</i> (3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle, PhD)		Total	
		N.º	%	N.º	%	N.º	%	N.º	%	N.º	%
Public HE	Univ.	78	2,4	9828	39,7	322	83,6	34	94,4	10262	36,0
	Poly.	2166	65,4	5646	22,8	0	0,0	0	0	7812	27,4
	Total	2244	67,7	15474	62,5	322	83,6	34	94,4	18074	63,5

Source: Adapted from Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional, I.P do Ministério do Trabalho e da Solidariedade Social, *in* GPEARI 2008: 56.

**Table 9 - New vocational courses in upper secondary schools**

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
New Courses	40	100	200	300	450

Source: Ministry of Education and Ministry of Work and Social Solidarity, programme New Opportunities, *in* Amaral 2006: 12.

**Table 10 – Increasing the offer of vocational education in upper secondary education**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Additional vacancies		+5,000	+5,000	+10,000	+10,000	+5,000
Accumulated new vacancies		+5,000	+10,000	+20,000	+30,000	+35,000
Total yearly vacancies	110,000	115,000	120,000	130,000	140,000	145,000

Source: Ministry of Education and Ministry of Work and Social Solidarity, programme New Opportunities, *in* Amaral 2006: 12.